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THE ARCHIVE

*A Literary Periodical Published by
The Students of Duke University
Durham, North Carolina*

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CONTENTS

Editorial	5
A Diamond Ring by Drew Spears	7
two poems by A. McTighe	11
Metamorphosis Tropic by Mike Jones	12
The Night the Store Burned Down by David Moffett	16
The Saints in Caesar's Household by Anne Tyler reprinted by permission	18

THE ARCHIVE
of Duke University

Is looking for fiction, poetry, art work, essays, photographs, and feature articles. All work must be of high quality. Submissions should be made to room 301 Flowers Building, or mailed to box 4005, Duke Station. Deadline for the November issue is October 15.

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EDITORIAL

I suppose everyone who saw the *Archive* born has died by now. For most lives are briefer and more doubtful than the duration of eighty years. I find it strange, and perhaps a little frightening, to realize I do not even know the name of the editor who produced the first edition. There is not even a copy in this office.

Yet despite this dreadful tapping to awaken the awareness of my mortality, I am heartened to find the door to a great freedom opening before me. For although the *Archive* is, as our letterhead proudly proclaims, 'The South's Oldest Collegiate Magazine,' it has not yet grown aged. (We may be mad, but we are not senile.) Instead of growing older and more finished each year, I find that the *Archive* has essentially begun anew again and again and again. I think it remarkable that every few years, a new editor has created a new magazine. Only the name has remained, and even that has not had a perfect record. It is this wonderful disinterest in the *Archive* 'tradition' that has kept the magazine from becoming monotonous and boring.

It is this absence of stifling tradition that gives me such a feeling of freedom. There is no set tradition of format; I may choose from those of the past (and there have been *very* many), or invent one of my own. The format seen here is a mixture of old and new. The new-looking size is really an old one, but the use of offset printing is entirely new to these pages. In future issues this year, I hope this method will permit the *Archive* to print more photographs than ever before, and to print them better. But that depends on whether or not we are submitted photographs for consideration.

It is the matter of submissions that is my greatest concern. I have heard accusations that the *Archive* has a 'tradition' of publishing 'crummy poems,' and 'those stupid stories that are always about the same things.' I used to worry about this until I realized what little truth there was in these accusations had been distorted

by the accuser's misunderstanding of the entire point of this publication. The *Archive* is not a professional magazine, although I am proud that we have, and will publish poems and stories of professional quality; such as the reprinted story by Anne Tyler. But I am prouder to know that Miss Tyler was not a professional when her story first appeared in the *Archive*, just as William Styron, Reynolds Price, and many other writers were not professionals when their works were first printed in the pages of former volumes. These writers were students, and the *Archive* is a student magazine. The far greatest majority of our submissions are from undergraduates. This present issue is composed of work done by last year's Freshmen. The story by Anne Tyler was written early in the university career, but as she did not follow the 'traditional' chronology of college life, it may not be correct to say that she was a member of the Freshman class when 'The Saints' was first published. And when the producers of this work are as young as they are, it is to be expected that their work may be flawed. It is expected that many of their stories will be about the 'fall of innocence,' or 'a young child meeting death for the first time.' As these writers are all between sixteen and twenty, it is not possible that their own 'loss of innocence,' or their own 'meeting of death for the first time' occurred *that* long ago. That they can write so well about that which is so close and so important to them, is truly a proof of their talent and their proficiency. To criticise one or two points excessively, or to say 'I've seen enough stories about death,' is to miss the point of student writing. The purpose of student writing is to learn to write. The purpose of the *Archive* is to publish the best of this student writing. However, I feel that the magazine and the staff should also attempt to aid the development of the talent of both these published students, and those who are perhaps a little less technically accomplished. It is to these purposes that I dedicate my new volumes of the *Archive*.

R. Frederick Daugherty

A Diamond Ring

DREW SPEARS

When Randall Evans and his wife Susan walked into the auction and sat down (tired and sitting close, shivering a little from the Florida beach in the evening) they hadn't been married much more than a day. They drove from Tennessee - where when you were young it was still easy enough to get married - and though they hardly noticed it, changing turns driving all the way and talking together, they had eaten only twice since they left, once in Northern Alabama in the middle of the night at a truckers' stop that came like a vision beside the misty road, where the water tasted like fertilizer or maybe cigar smoke, and again here on the Eastern coast of Florida a little earlier, a hot dog on a stick apiece.

They had arrived at the beach in the morning; a white, dreary day, very cold. The tide was going out, they heard on the radio, so they stopped their car near where the water came in, and leaving shoes in the back seat, walked along the beach, jumping, running from the water at first and then letting the ocean rush over their feet and pull back again, feeling the numbness. Randall, noticing the sea birds walking on the sand in front of him, and seeing that behind him there were none, remembered the game he had played as a boy, herding them ahead like sheep because they refused to fly, absorbing others into the flock all the time as they walked. And Susan, looking towards the town and seeing the flashing lights on the boardwalk, but hearing only the waves, thought, 'It's like the snow - quiet and all.'

They walked along the beach for a mile, and then Randall said, 'It's about noon now. Maybe we'd better find us a room,' and they walked back to the car and drove into town and then across the bridge over the waterway where the rooms were cheaper than on the beach front. They parked in front of an old house with a porch and a small sign hung from a cast iron post, reading 'Rooms for Rent,' printed but not blocked. Randall looked at his wife and said, 'Is this all right?' and she nodded, smiling.

And what was not mentioned when Randall paid the woman five one dollar bills at the door, and then as they walked upstairs to their room, but that meant so much to Susan now was that she did not feel married, that last night they had made love as before - on a dark road somewhere for an hour or maybe more; and because Randall had said there was not enough money for a room, that in Florida it would be different, she had believed it, and at that time she thought of earlier in the evening when, holding her hand and rolling her new gold band between his fingertips, he had said, 'Someday there'll be another one there, I swear it,' and she had believed that too.

As they sat in the auction room now, Randall looked around him. On the window facing outside, he read backwards the foot-tall letters, red like fire and italicized, 'AUCTION NIGHTLY 7-11 PM.' In the front of the room, behind the auctioneer, were shelves of merchandise - silver ashtrays, countless vases and flowerpots, pocketbooks, suitcases, even stuffed animals like the ones you tried to win at some of the other places on the boardwalk. Over in one corner, hung straight from the ceiling, was a rug with intricately woven colors in an oval pattern. It was the kind you saw over in India a lot, Randall thought.

A man had just bought a silver tea service for forty dollars, and while the auctioneer said, 'Folks, let me tell you, he got a real good buy,' the man walked over to the cashier, looking a little bewildered, Randall thought. Four old ladies who sat behind Randall and Susan in the back row stared with dull eyes at the tea service and said, 'Oh, yes, it's beautiful,' and 'That would have looked nice in the dining room. wouldn't it?' in an accent

that Randall recognized as Pennsylvania Dutch from passing through a few years back. A couple in the front row got up and left; there were about fifteen people in the room.

The auctioneer, a tall man with a brown tweed jacket and hair combed back and pasted down, smiled at the audience, and picking up a leather box about a foot square from the table in front of him, said, 'Now, we have something a little special to sell,' and then Susan, noticing that Randall's eyes were fixed on that box, put her hand on his that rested on his knee. 'Now you know we're not going to buy anything, all right?' she said, and bringing his hand to her lips, held it there a moment and then let go. Randall looked straight ahead and said, 'Let's watch.'

'You folks don't know what's in this box, I know that,' said the auctioneer, 'but from just what you've seen tonight, from the things you nice people have bought, who would be willing to offer me ten dollars for what's inside, if I told you whatever it is is worth much more?' There was a silence in the room; nobody said a word. 'You would, Sir?' continued the man up front, pointing around the room, 'and you and you, Madam?' Randall looked around the room but he didn't see anyone raise his hand; he wondered where all these people were.

'Well, I admire the faith you put in us because,' and he opened the box slowly, 'because look at *this*.' Randall watched carefully as the box opened; inside were rings - about twenty of them - each set in a notch, glittering like diamonds. 'These, ladies and gentlemen, are genuine *diamond rings*.' A man sitting with his wife in front of Randall said, 'My God!' A gentle murmur filled the room. In the back row one of the ladies said 'Ohhhh' and they chattered among themselves. Randall took Susan's hand and felt the gold ring on her finger. He looked at her; she was staring into her lap at his hand in hers. 'Look at that, baby,' he said to her, 'look at that,' but she kept her eyes down, her hair covering her face on the side so that he could not see.

The auctioneer told the ladies in back to please keep their voices down because how was he to tell them about the rings if they were talking, and then he said, 'I know you people are going to find this hard to believe, but there is more than a *hundred thousand dollars* worth of diamonds in this little box here.' Randall wondered if it were true, and what it was like to hold that much money in your hand.

The auctioneer rummaged through a box on the floor and brought out a piece of parchment with Gothic writing on it. 'And just for the people who are a little skeptical, what I hold in my hand here is a guarantee - yes, a written guarantee that everything that I say up here tonight is the absolute *Gospel* truth. Now let me ask you, is that enough proof?' Behind him Randall heard one lady say, 'Yes, sure, that's good enough for me,' and turning around, watched the other ladies nod in agreement.

'And another thing. Don't you people get any ideas. See up there?' He pointed to the side wall, up above the shelves. 'See those grids up there?' Randall looked at the three ventilating grids. 'Well, behind each one of those is a man with a machine gun, so I'm warning you now.' Several men in the audience coughed and a few women re-crossed their legs. Susan lifted her eyes from her lap and placing her hand on Randall's shoulder, said, 'Let's go, all right?' but Randall - tense and breathing hard - staring at the grids and then at the man up front, brushed her hand away as if it had been a mosquito.

'Now you people are probably saying to yourselves, 'How can I possibly afford a diamond?' - and, well, you may be right, but let me just show you one of these.' The man put the parchment back into the box on the floor. Picking up the container with the rings, he picked out one and put it on a white cone that he held in his other hand. He placed the rings back on the table, and with a slip of the hand that he hadn't intended, grazed the box so that it teetered on the edge of the table and fell to the floor, scattering four or five rings around. 'Oh, no,' the man said. He called to the other end of the room, 'George, would you please come pick up these rings?' The Negro man, standing in a corner in a denim janitor's uniform, came to the front of the room, picked the rings up from the floor and placed the box back on the table. Randall watched in amazement, wondering if the machine guns were trained on the janitor, watching his every move.

'Now, I'm going to pass this ring around, and I want each and every one of you to take a good look at it; and remember - the machine gun.' Randall remembered in high school when they used to pass around embryos. 'Now, while it's being passed around, I'm going to tell you something about that ring. Have any of you folks ever heard of Tiffany & Co.?' Randall had heard of it somewhere; he couldn't remember where. Looking around, he noticed some of the people nodding their heads. 'Well, Tiffany's is a famous jeweler in New York, probably the most famous jeweler in the world. Anyway, about twenty years ago, Tiffany's was hitting a bad spell, and they were forced to sell some of their jewelry *cheap* just to keep from going under. Well, this ring that you're looking at now originally sold for one thousand dollars - it's a genuine white diamond, I tell you - but because of the bad times they sold it to an associate of ours for three hundred. That's quite a reduction, isn't it? I'll tell you *right now*, you couldn't buy this diamond for five hundred now the way diamond prices have gone up.'

The ring was in Randall's row of chairs now; the man sitting several chairs over from Susan handed it to her. She took the cone and kept it at arm's length, glancing at it only fleetingly, as a man looks at a woman he has just met, and as she handed it to Randall he noticed the moment when her eyes - shining moist, a little red - caught its sparkle. The auctioneer was saying, 'Let's be frank, folks: everybody loves diamonds,' as Randall grasped the cone. He looked at the large stone set in gold, took it off the cone, and placed it on his little finger as far as it would go, forgetting for a moment about the machine guns. . . 'Somebody once said, 'Diamonds are forever' - you've all heard that'. . . he saw all the colors he knew in the stone, and he saw more . . . 'Well, perhaps tonight's the night one of you has been waiting for . . .'

Randall took the ring off his finger, placed it back on the paper cone, and passed it on. Looking over at his wife, he tried to think of something to say, but he could not. 'Now we're going to start bidding here at twenty-five dollars; that's reasonable enough, isn't it? What good man in this room is going to start us off?' The auctioneer took the cone with the ring on it from the last person and held it in front of him. 'Boy, she's a beauty, isn't she?' The man in front of Randall raised his hand. 'All right,' said the auctioneer, 'we've got twenty-five bid - that's about a twentieth of what it should go for. How about thirty-five? Do I hear thirty-five?' He pointed to the back of the room, behind Randall. 'O.K. I've got thirty-five from the nice lady in the back.' Randall looked around and saw one of the Pennsylvania Dutch ladies, giggling, self-conscious. 'Oh, you'd *love* to have *that*, wouldn't you?' the auctioneer said to the lady.

'Oh, yes, oh, I'd love to have *that*,' she said, and kept on giggling.

'Only trouble is,' continued the auctioneer, 'I can't sell this for thirty-five; that's like *giving* it away.'

'Oh, sure, you can sell it for that, I can get it for that, sure,' the old lady said.

Randall was getting plenty annoyed at the woman. He felt very much like turning around and saying 'Lady, can't you *see* he can't sell a diamond ring for *thirty-five dollars*,' but he resisted.

'We've got to get more bids, ladies and gentlemen; otherwise I'm going to have to put the ring back in the box and lock it up in the safe.' Randall saw no safe; it must have been in a back room.

'Oh, come now, let's be reasonable. Is there anyone here who is going to give fifty for this?' There was a silence; Randall looked at the ring and saw it sparkle, and as he lifted his head to the level of the auctioneer's face, their eyes met for an instant. Randall looked down quickly, but somehow he sensed what was coming.

The auctioneer smiled, 'How about you, son? You look like you'd do about anything for that girl of yours.' Randall looked over at her, but she was looking away at the other wall. He placed his hand again in hers, and she jumped when he did it, a tiny spasm, as if it were the first time he had ever touched her. Randall looked up at the auctioneer. 'Yes, I would,' he said.

'Well, does she have a diamond?'

'No. . . no, she doesn't.' He felt the heavy silence in the room, acutely aware of the eyes focused on him.

'You know there'll be a time for that in the future sometime, don't you?' Randall felt sick; the man had no idea.

'Yes, there'll be a time.'

'I know she hopes so,' said the man, 'you can tell.' Randall could feel Susan's shoulder against his; she was breathing heavily. He looked over at her, head hung low, her chin almost resting on her breasts, baring the whiteness of her neck. He wanted very much to kiss her there.

'Well, now, if I told you you could have this ring for fifty dollars, I bet you'd jump at the chance, wouldn't you?'

'Y. . . yes.'

The man walked over towards him. Randall felt the tightness in his throat, and - like in a dream - he found he could not move the muscles of his body. The man smiled; Randall thought it was a kind smile, like a minister's.

'How would you pay for this ring?' He took the ring off the cone and placed it slowly on his little finger. How would you pay for it? Cash, check, or money order?'

'I guess I'd pay . . . I guess I'll pay with cash.' His hand floated away from hers in her lap and reached inside his coat pocket, removing his wallet. From somewhere on the other side of the room a man said 'Don't do it - it's paste' but he did not hear. As he reached inside his wallet and removed two twenty dollar travellers' checks and a ten dollar bill, he heard Susan say 'Oh, please,' and strengthened a little, but wondering whether he should have been, he handed the money to the man. His hand fell to his side, and looking inside the wallet at the ten dollars that remained, he felt his stomach twist inside him.

'Thank you,' said the auctioneer, 'now, ladies and gentlemen, let's have a fine hand for this couple.' Randall heard the clapping - it was the first time he could remember being applauded for anything - and taking Susan's hand, followed the man over to the cashier. 'Here, she'll take care of you,' he said and walked back behind his table in front of the room. The clapping subsided, and as the auctioneer started talking again, Randall felt a little better.

'That would be fifty-one sixty-eight with tax,' said the woman behind the counter coldly. Randall reached for his wallet again and paid the additional amount. He saw the numbers rung up on the cash register and the red 'Thank you' sign beside them.

'Thank you again,' said the cashier.

Randall took the ring off the glass-topped counter and turned towards Susan. He took her hand and slipped the ring on her finger. He felt her hand tremble; he wanted her to say something, not 'Thank you' but maybe 'I love you,' but her eyes focused on her hand and his. With his other hand he lifted her head so that she was looking at him. He kissed her gently on the forehead and said, 'Are you happy?' And as he felt the hot moisture on her face with his hands, she shook her head slightly, almost none at all.

Randall dropped her hand, leaving her standing there as he walked towards the front of the room. He noticed as some of the people began looking at him again. The auctioneer was selling alarm clocks now - a dollar a shot, he said - and when he realized that the boy was standing there, he stopped what he was saying and looked over at him. There was a silence.

'Would anybody,' said Randall, 'Would anybody like to buy a diamond ring?' His eyes were heavy and he felt blood rising to his head. But nobody said a word, and as he waited there for a reply, his hands like weights at his side, the auctioneer sold another alarm clock, and he could hear the old ladies chattering about it in the back, like old birds.

TWO POEMS

A. McTIGHE

lithe angel
you pluck at
my brain at its turning,
lithe angel my love
is like turbulence folding-
you lift me like ashes
and bring me up high,

and only the days i discern

several time i have drowned in the never well-
in its stagnant waters in the trees and bricks
its buttress;
and as my lungs would drain of air
i'd fill my body full, full of yearning-
and plant my feet to grow within the well-
and let me stand a christ in andes
and let me call out like a siren
and bring the mind legion
to bow and leave me their gold.

would be the thing to decay - thieves to steal its
mortar - and the wisps of engines to eat
and tear out its throat;
would be that crocodiles kill all the catfish-
green grass grows in the mind-
and twilight is a thin fading wire.

Metamorphosis Tropic

MIKE JONES

part 1

She stooped to conquer and lifted to abase
and from these grey eyes I learned all . . .
Once, among the clamor and breaking, awakening
of the primordial dawn, and a frightful foot
of innocence scratching, prickling among
branches of quiet and immense trees,
these trees were found possessed of wit,
possessed of irony and mind, as, whispering
conclavelike among themselves, whispering
about, greenrobed, forged passports for the earth.
o holy river of anguished transformation

for the earth I have one spade
for the sun none
a heart for Mars - Jupiter, Thor, Zeus if need be . . .
and a certain lack of envy for every living thing.

For these things I find to be of value:
unparalleled, the feelings I feel . . .
Cerebral valley of idiot desires.
o holy river
A lack of hope, rising from my studies at dawn,
wisping freedom adventurous careless of
things dealing with religion . . .
I am not religious nor could be.
I worship things exalted but unlifted -
the subtle differences of sparks of fire
a burning inspiration, the unthought mind,
a greengold leaf far from my reach
that I may only look, and as a child not touch.
I can not touch.
It is possible that I would destroy the
greengold whispering leaf

Of small things I would have none.

I find myself not a unity
and wish disunity: a great search for insecurity.
and born with gills and wings and lungs and legs
the same as others of my kind,
I think out, call out, call out, from a flake of
snow in my blizzard, a personal response,
a slight increased disunity, a collective slight
movement in the yellow utopian fog
a death by a bit
and suitably applauded by all the group.

part II

'Che bella' from the cook upon viewing my charcoal
of dissolution, of pattern.

A drawing of a centaur with notquite human face,
an expression of desire, a Limbo longing for Hell,
for death, for movement, for response, for a onesound
word passing not through the greyblack screendoor
passing only passing through clean air even received
by no ear, uncomprehended . . .

But there is no air.

there is no movement of the static field, the
windless field, without weeds, with rocks and moss . . .

There is perfect comprehension, a

'Portrait of the Artist.'

Found in the stagbelly, mindless earth movement,
production undesired with effects highly desireable;

Progeny of the wellbuilt earth:

blackness upon blackness
rhythm, rhythm, change and fruitfulness
pain upon pain . . .

In ghosthead beach we find fishes walking

Later, metamorphosis, the adamantine shore
based on rock, the static and immovable . . .

Rising from dreaming, rising from my studies,
I swam in the iced brown fountain
 clothed in bloodybrown fluid robes . . .
Screams from left and right, neighbors and neighbors,
 I measured the distance from pole to pole,
 from altar to death,
 and found it immeasurable.
Regaining my studies, nausea upon nausea,
There was the stentorian approach of the dawn:
 a violent shaking of my mountainous trees
 a violent cancerous growth of my vines
 my entire forest uprooted
 my violent redrock plain laid bare
o holy river of anguished transformation

part III

In the winter we are nourished by ice and winds.
 we build ice statues
The river may be trod in safety, its solidity
 granting, for the time, separation.
It is the heat we fear.
 a spark, a flame, the phallusglorious candle . . .
In flame we altarpolish with sooty black hands.
The flame of the martyr rings unglorious in our ears.
Our eyes are softened by darkness
Our skins become soft and white
 bespeaking a proper preparation for death.
The innocent and the wise coexist, as for all the
 wellnourished Oriental masters . . .
Our minds abound with theories, form, shape, and color . . .
 opiates are easily found as fishes in the stream.

part IV

The unreal hyperbola of 'Person Throwing Stone at a
 Bird' is the real nonetheless to the mind beneath
 the forests.
 quiet imaginings, calm contemplations in the
 evening air

But there are no forests
 there is no air
There are winds, tempests of contemplation,
 only in my mind
o holy river of anguished transformation

Rhythm, rhythm, change and fruitfulness
ghostweb voices drift on the prison night air
 toward my place, sitting beneath blackgreen shrubs,
 contemplating the pregnant moon.
It orates upon its personal pains
 in terms of light.

'By mata ganga I lay me down to rest - perhaps to die.'
In the fields fir trees by the thousands sprout:
 protection from winds too harsh,
 building materials for my future house,
 where I shall breed.
 and wood for hearthlight, heat
 for my children coming after me,
 irreconcilable and anguished as I.

fir trees now sprout on the redrock plain
by mata ganga I lay me down to rest
o holy river of anguished transformation
o holy river of anguished transformation

THE NIGHT THE STORE BURNED DOWN

DAVID MOFFETT

The summer before my twelfth birthday the store burned down. That's what it was always called, just 'the Store', and in Beaufort County that usually came out 'de Sto', or 'Miz Mattie's Sto' if you were speaking to a foreigner. It belonged to my grandfather, its gilt cash register and single counter were presided over by my grandmother, and like their house across the dirt road, it was made out of the solid cypress my grandfather knew would never rot, except for one side that was made out of boards from an old potato grader. (That side had rotted, and was nailed over with odd pieces of galvanized tin and old license plates.) It had a tin roof, too, that sounded like machineguns if you were ever inside during a hailstorm. The shelves behind the counter went all the way up to the ceiling, so high that no one could reach the topmost cans up among the mud dobber nests. I could imagine opening those cans, someday when I was grown enough to get them down with a ladder, and pouring out on the table for all to see the stone pellets that I fancied were inside them, the creamed corn and navy beans petrified with age.

It rains right much in Eastern Carolina in the early summer. Big black clouds rise up out of the East, from the sea, like black earth from the plowpoint. My grandparents, like all country people, knew exactly when the rain was going to come, and after dinner they sat out on the porch to wait for its coolness, my grandfather grizzled with his day's growth of beard, his summer shirt sweat stained; my grandmother in an old fine dress gray like spiderwebs, overweight, her arms on the arms of the chair pale and dappled with dark spots, like sausages. When the rain came rustling into the hedges round the house where I climbed in spite of snakes, I ran inside, to hide in the little dark cubbyhole under the stairs if there was thunder. But, that evening as always, my grandparents sat out on the porch with the rain blowing in almost to their feet, daring the lightening to get them. From my hiding place I heard them talking, talking softly, about profit and loss and crops, and spreading out the events of the day like a deck of cards well fingered by their words, and then folding them out of sight again.

I always marveled at their courage, the way they sat there just waiting for the soil to swallow them up or something to fall on them from the sky, because I was frightened of everything. Even now, I think they should have been afraid, at least of lightening. Fire had followed them around all their lives. First there was the cotton gin, that burned long before I was born, before the government put controls on cotton and forced my grandfather to stop growing it. It was run by a black, throbbing steam engine that was the demon of my mother's childhood dreams, and the gin had burned when the nigger whose job it was to light the fire in the boiler turned over his blowtorch into a pile of unginned cotton. The flames flared up hundreds of feet, so bright that they were seen all the way across the fields at White Six, where six white houses stood in a row, and in Black Bottom by the canal, where Sara the cook lived even then. And the Belhaven Grain Company, that was the only business venture that my grandfather had been involved in that he hadn't owned all himself, its one and only elevator just exploded one day. Another day, during a violent thunderstorm, a ball of electrical fire came rolling like a red hot cannonball right in the front door of the store, passing right by Uncle Buddy, my greatuncle, who swallowed his cut of Brown's Mule and fell over backwards in his chair getting out of its way. It made straight for the iron stove and, or so my grandfather always told it, went flying up the stovepipe to mingle its powers with the storm again.

Later, that evening of which I speak that culminated it all, when the storm seemed to be drawing off and I had come out of my hiding and coaxed my grandmother into playing checkers with me in the entrance hall just inside the door, I saw out of the corner of my eye a snaky point of lightning, the last bolt of the storm, shoot straight as vengeance for the little chimney that perched on top of the store. And from the darkness of the porch my grandfather, remembering and experiencing in one vast instant that turned his eyes as big as chicken eggs, cried out, 'God A'mighty Mattie. come here, your store's just a ball o' fire.'

Of course, nothing could be done. The Pamlico Volunteer Fire Brigade got there in time to keep the shed behind the store from burning, but the water in their tank truck wasn't enough to put out the flames that were hulling the store itself, and they knew it, so they just hung around to keep the crowd of niggers that had collected from getting hurt, and to keep the fields from catching afire. The only water anywhere was Shill's Pond, 'way down the road past the Carrowins'. When I was finally put to bed, flames still played among the charred timbers.

Last year, me now seventeen, my father and I made a trip down to visit the graves that needed visiting, and to see the old place again, now rented to a drunkard who cut down the hedges because in his fits of delirium he imagined that they reached out arms to strangle him. We dug in earnest the ashes of the store, unearthing glass and burst tin cans like artifacts and finally the column of fused sand that the lightning made when it went into the ground. that my father knew was there, and bore it home like a relic.

The Saints in Caesar's Household

Mary Robinson did not come home until that fall. People said she was coming mainly because of Laura (they'd been best friends all through school) but Mary's mother said Mary didn't know about Laura at all; no one wanted to tell her. Mary's mother was the sort of woman who bought brooms from the Knights of Columbus, and wrote letters to the little boy who was on the March of Dimes poster, and cried when she sang Christmas carols to the County Home; everyone said she was exactly the one to tell Mary. But every week she spent one morning trying to think of something to write Mary and she always ended up with nothing but how is your work (Mary was with a publishing firm in New York) and have you met any nice young men, and then something about whom she'd seen lately. She believed in telling bad news in three letters, gradually. And she had it planned to send Mary a clipping first, saying Miss Laura Gates had left her job in Chicago for a brief stay with her parents, and to pencil in the margin a note asking if she remembered Laura (although that was a silly question). Next would come a letter telling how she'd seen her on the street, and she was looking a little nervous and thinner than usual and had asked how Mary was; and finally the third letter, saying something was wrong with Laura Gates, something in her mind, and it was the saddest thing she'd yet seen and she was sorry to be the one to tell her.

That was how she had it planned. But summer came and went with her somehow forgetting all about Laura every time she sat down to write Mary, and in the fall Mary came home herself and there was no need to write it. She came on the noon bus and one of the first things she said after she walked in the door was, "Clemson Roberts on the bus said Laura Gates was home."

And Mary's mother looked at Mary's father and wrapped one hand up in her apron as if it were a gift and said, "Yes, she has been since May." When she said that she watched to see if Mary were going to say something else, like why didn't you tell me sooner when you knew there wasn't ever another person who made as much difference as Laura. But she didn't ask that.

She said, "She didn't write from Chicago. I thought she had forgotten all about us and wasn't ever coming back."

"Well, she's back now," her mother said.

And after that Mary went upstairs to wash and didn't say anything about Laura at all, just handed little presents to her parents and talked to her aunt on the phone and put sheets on her old bed. "What I heard," she said at dinner, "about Laura Gates throwing her little sister's clothes away, was that true?"

And her mother said, "Yes, I think I heard that too."

But when Mary didn't ask anything after that, or even mention it, they knew it must have all been said by Clemson Roberts on the bus and they didn't try to explain any more, or tell about the mailman or the Catholic confessional or any of the rest of it, or even comfort her.

Mary's aunt said (this was on the second day she was home) that she could remember when Mary and Laura spent all of their seventh summer stealing smudgepots from the road construction and storing them in the garage. "Somebody found them," she said. "I can't remember who."

"It was you that found us," Mary said.

"Maybe it was. Maybe it was and maybe it wasn't, I can't remember now. But I know I must have been near, because I can still see you standing there, the two of you, sticking up for your rights and defending your smudgepots."

She said later that that should have done it, if Mary had forgotten about how she and Laura were in the old days it wasn't because she hadn't tried to prod her memory. "You might almost say it's her *duty*, to go see her," she said. "People are wondering, and asking, and whispering amongst themselves."

And they were. Even Mary's mother knew that; Mary's mother spent her Fridays visiting the sick and she said to Mary's father, on the fourth evening, "I would have gone to see Laura Gates myself, every day of her life, but she's never been able to abide me and it was Mary who was close to her, Mary was the one who never let a day pass without her going there or Laura coming here. I don't know, I just don't know," and trailed off and stared into the twilight, while upstairs Mary sat at her window and fiddled with the ruffles on the organdy curtains and watched the black trees against the dark autumn sky.

On the fifth day Mary got up early; it was raining and even her room was grey and misty. She put on warm clothes and at breakfast she asked her mother if she could have the car, just for the morning. Her mother was reading the paper. She said, "Take it for the day, I'm not going anywhere," and turned another page and asked if she would bring her some teabags if she went near the grocery store.

"I doubt if I'll be going near the grocery store," Mary said.

She had already put a scarf over her head and left before her mother had really thought about her go-

ing. When she was talking to Mary's aunt later she said, "It might be she's going to Laura's, but today of all days I almost hope not, she was so grim when she left I don't think she'd be much cheer."

"Well, you never can tell. Maybe it was just because she *was* going to see Laura, we don't know."

"Now that's no reason," Mary's mother said.

And Mary parked the car in front of the Gates', and walked up through cold driving rain and rang the bell. A wet cat rubbed against her. She took off the scarf and shook out her hair, and then the door opened and Laura stood there with her face made thinner by the shadows behind her and a cup of coffee in the hand that wasn't holding the door. She was in dark blue, an old dark blue sweater and a dark blue pleated skirt that needed cleaning. She must have had them a long time for them to look so shabby, but Mary could never remember seeing them before; she had always remembered Laura in red and orange and green and peacock, sometimes all together because Laura said the way some people believed about colors practically amounted to superstition and there wasn't any reason why you couldn't jumble colors up.

All this time, while Mary was trying to get used to everything all over again, the world was as silent as an empty building and there was only the hushing sound of the rain. And then Laura stepped aside and said, "Who did you come to see?" which was what she always asked, even if she knew.

"I came to see you," Mary said.

"Well, come in."

The smells in the house were of wet wool and dry dust, the way they were any time of year. Laura led the way to the dining room and in her navy blue she was like another shadow in the house, or a dark flower on the living room rug. "I haven't eaten breakfast," she said. "Have you?"

"Yes."

Laura sat down at the head of the table. "I always have coffee," she said, "and two rolls. That's my breakfast. You might want to know, if you came to watch me. But I'm all right now, I'm getting better, and there's nothing much to watch any more."

She buttered a roll, and then put it down.

"But if you'd come to watch me," she said, "You'd have come before. You've been home five days now."

"Yes, I have," Mary said.

Laura pushed her rolls away and stretched, smiling, with her arms far above her head. "Have a roll," she said, "and say what you're doing in New York. I can still *hear* all right."

"I'm not doing anything," Mary said. "I'm on vacation."

She put sugar in her coffee and Laura handed her the cream; she handed it as if she were a judge hand-

ing the witness a glass of water and telling her to go on, but Mary didn't say any more. She just put the cream pitcher down and stared absently at the brown wallpaper, the wallpaper with the edges darker and the tangled vines as thin and dark as Laura.

"Saturday night I heard a funny noise," Laura said. She sounded as if she were prompting Mary, waiting for her to take the story up. Mary looked at her. "It was at midnight I heard it," Laura said. "A sound like a loudspeaker in a railroad station, frightened and hurrying, with that kind of background of chattering voices blurring together."

"In your house you heard it?"

"Yes. And a man said, 'All right, Laura,' and I sat straight up in bed with my heart beating so loud I couldn't have heard him again if I'd tried. I kept waiting for my family to come bursting out of bedrooms saying, 'What was that? Did you hear that?' and comforting each other. But no one came. Somewhere there was a little creak, and I waited a while longer, but no one came."

Mary turned a fork over and over in her hands.

"At breakfast I asked my family, I said, 'Did you hear anything in the night?' But their faces were funny and blurred, all turned toward me while I stared hard at the dining room wallpaper and waited for my mother to say, 'Now, Laura, there wasn't a sound,' and she did, and she passed me the toast."

"It was probably the house," Mary said. "That you heard, I mean. That or you being half-asleep, or maybe both."

"Of course it was," Laura said. "Do you think I hear *voices*?"

"No. I was explaining more for your mother, I guess."

"My mother's so old. She's touched people who've touched other people all the way back to Babylon, all those generations touching hands."

"So have you," Mary said.

"No, I haven't, I don't feel that way. My mother can remember back to when ballpoint pens were a miracle and cost fifteen dollars. Mrs. Parry was the envy of all the women in the neighborhood; she had a fur coat down to her ankles and a ball point pen."

She threw back her head and laughed, and Mary laughed too, just to see her; the whole day seemed better. Mary pushed her chair back and said, "Let's go to the amphitheatre, it's always nice in the rain," and Laura said, "All right," and pulled a brown jacket from the hall closet.

They went outdoors and the rain had turned into a fine spray, just enough to make their faces shine under the wet leaves that hung over the sidewalk.

"Things are supposed to seem little when you come back to a place," Laura said. "But everything seems big to me."

"Me too," Mary said.

"Did your aunt remind you about the smudge-pots?"

"Yes."

"She reminded me too; she called up my mother and asked did I remember. My mother said *she* did even if I didn't, and I said I did too. But she asked as if it were long ago and tiny, and I still remember it as being as near and big as this morning, or bigger."

"Well, not bigger," Mary said.

"To me it's bigger."

They walked to the end of the block and then turned off into the trees that were to the right of them. Laura led the way. She held out her arms to balance herself down narrow slippery stones that were laid down like steps, and when they were through the trees there was the little amphitheatre, deserted in the rain, with the stone wall around it and the parking lot completely empty at the rear and the stone seats sloping down in semicircles to the stage. "I never can imagine what this place is like when the plays are going," Laura said, "I don't think we've ever been here then."

"I have," Mary said.

Laura climbed down toward the stage, leaping from one semicircle to the other in great wide steps and sometimes almost missing because it was a long way to jump, while Mary sat on the top row and watched her. Halfway down Laura stopped and turned back so she was facing Mary.

"Why do you think she reminded you about the smudgepots?" she called.

"Why did she?"

"Because your mother visits the sick in the County Home and lends her heating pad out, that's why. Don't you want to be reminded how it was when we were seven, and remember and come visit like your mother with her jar of chicken broth? Don't you want to be like your mother?"

"No," Mary said.

"And remember the aged and understand the insane?"

"No," Mary said.

"Were you afraid to come?"

"No."

Laura turned and spread her arms like wings, looking up at the grey sky and letting the spray fall flat on her face. "Well, that's why she told you," she said after a minute. "So you would remember the aged and understand the insane." And she leapt down one more semicircle and sat down, with Mary sitting almost directly behind her and seven rows back. They stayed that way for ten minutes; all that time Mary sat staring straight ahead at Laura and the stage below her, and Laura rested her chin in her hands and

looked at her shoes. At the end of that time she raised her head and looked at the stage and said, "But your aunt was trying, all the same, and those smudge-pots *were* fun, I do remember that."

"I do too," Mary said.

The rain started coming in drops. They both sat waiting for each drop, because it splashed large and cool and was different from the spray, with a cleaner feeling to it. Laura stood up again and started turning around and around with her hands raised to keep her hair away from the back of her neck and let the rain splash on it. "Your aunt," she said, "and your mother, and the nuns in Our Lady, and the Salvation Army . . ." and to Mary her voice came echoing across through the raining world like a chant. After she stopped spinning she started walking calmly down the hill, one foot on the stone and the other on the ground; stone, ground, stone, ground, while her voice swam back to Mary. "You even ask them, you go to Catholic confessional when you've never set foot in mass even, and offer to let the priest confess to you, poor man, but people won't hear of it."

"I hear thunder," Mary said.

"People won't hear of it," Laura repeated; she was far away now. "They won't hear of it, they won't even listen. I don't know my sister. Do you know my sister, Jennifer Gates?"

"Yes, a little."

"I said, 'Stay and talk,' but she's always away. Even when she's home, she's a little bit away; I woke up at seven and put all her clothes in the garbage can, so she would have to stay and talk, she couldn't just go walking off. That was silly, but there was some sense to it."

She stopped on the front row, far below Mary, and turned, standing on tiptoe, and reached high up with both hands and shouted, "Can't you just *see* my sister, without a stitch on, sitting down and *finally* getting into a really good *talk*?"

Mary smiled, and then she began laughing and leaned forward with her hands on the stone and laughed.

"That's right," Laura said. "Now you know; there isn't anything to be afraid of now."

And after that she seemed to be finished worrying; she turned again and started climbing the little side steps to the stage. "You can't stop a soul; you lean out of windows and say, 'Don't you even want to talk about it?' but they don't bother trying . . . why did I do that? I should have known it wouldn't work." And then she smiled, while Mary on the back row stood up and tightened her scarf.

"Stay where you are," Laura said, "it's better there." She wandered on to the stage. "Can you hear me?"

"I can hear you fine," Mary said.

"Even with the rain?"

"If you speak loudly."

"Well, then, listen. Because same April you'll go up to someone—an old woman on a bus, a man selling pencils, a little boy with a turtle—and you'll think about how you understand even the littlest thing inside them; you're even the same people, and you run after them quick and catch them—"

She stopped and looked up at Mary. Mary was sitting in the rain and frowning at the ground.

"The saints salute you," Laura said.

Mary looked up at her.

"And especially they that are of Caesar's household; that's a Bible verse and the only one I know, but I think I will all my life remember that feeling you get in the front of your head when you catch people and say, 'Wait,' and they look at you and pull their arm gently away from you and go on—Nowadays there is too much love in the world; it goes floating around and nobody wants it. Are you getting cold?"

"No," Mary said. "A goose walked over my grave."

"You can go home."

"I'm not cold."

"Go home!" she shouted suddenly, and it echoed around the seats. "It's none of your *business* being here, up on top row so far away I couldn't touch you with a bamboo pole; who did *you* ever reach out for as they went by? And what are you *doing* here?"

And she stood with her fists clenched beside her

and shouted, while Mary stood up and wrapped her coat around her and climbed back up through the crees to the sidewalk. Once she looked back, and smiled at Laura, but Laura had turned away and it wasn't any use. Mary left her that way, her dark blue clothes heavy with rain and her back to everything.

People say (and Mary's mother also) that it was a heartless thing to leave a disturbed person out there alone in the rain, with the stones all around her and the grey sky pressing in. Mary's aunt said she didn't care *what* Laura Gates had done, or what had been said between them, you still have to make allowances for a nervous person. She said all this straight to Mary, whom she found standing at her bedroom window the afternoon of the day it all happened. She said, "Sometimes it takes an effort, Mary to understand people who are mentally disturbed." And then she clicked her teeth and stared over Mary's shoulder into the street below. "I don't understand you," she said after a minute. "I would have thought you should be very worried about Laura Gates."

But Mary only smiled and said, "No, I'm not worried," and then grew serious again and leaned her head against the windowframe.

After a while the aunt left, but Mary stood there with her eyes closed and for a minute she thought that even through her eyelids she could see, down on the street, the grass pressed flat by the wind and the people blurred by the rain.



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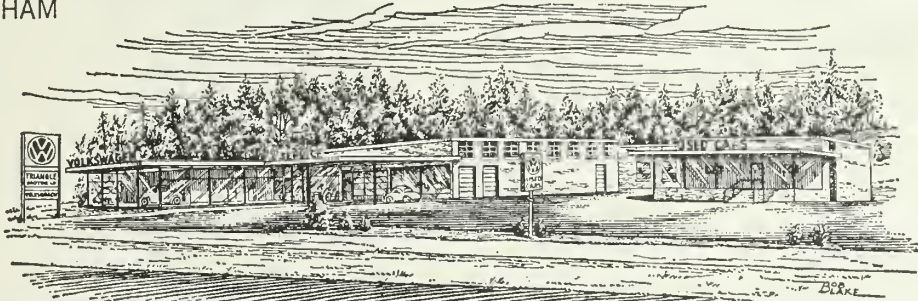
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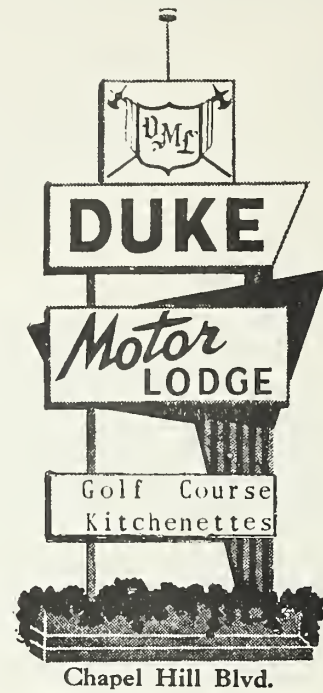
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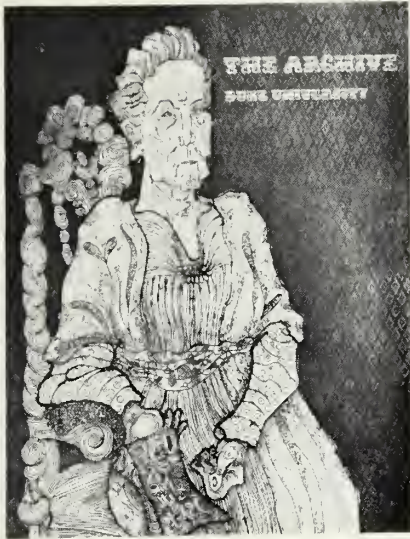
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CONTENTS

STORIES

Life in the Bag	5
by Charlie Smith	
Time Passes	11
by Cleve Callison	
A Sunday Morning Drive	19
by Tony Connor	
A Time to Keep Silence, And a Time to Speak	27
by JC Honeycutt	

POETRY

Testament	9
by Aden Field	
poem	15
by J. K. White	
jm's Swansong	22
by Al Bragg	
Reflections on Yeats' "Lapis Lazuli"	26
by William H. Guy	
Last Settling Day	29
by J. Close	
The Kitchen Maid	29
by Stephan Wonham	

ART

Cover: "Libby or The Aged Zoologist"	
by Lynn Whisnant	
Illustration "Life in the Bag"	8
by Harry C. Stokes	
Pencil drawing	13
by Linda Pannill	
Linoleum block of the Clock Tower	14
by Larry Funk	
The Moon Path	25
by Carolyn Darden	
Print	28
by James A. Alexander	

PHOTOGRAPHS

"Seagulls"	15
by Paul Seder	

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Charlie Smith

LIFE IN THE BAG

The buoy lights stood far off in a shaky arc dipping in and out among the waves and I watched with an adolescent wonder as tiny fish moved around the concrete buttress. I knew the ocean was clear but it spread away from me black and glassy and the full moon trailed a silver staircase across the waves toward me. The sky, too, was clear and unbroken, round and high like a vault with only a few stars shining through the moon's glow. Across the bay the last lights on Queen's Island blinked out as the early morning wind blew in from the sea.

I wondered if there were any lights on in my house, but the island was wide where I looked and I could not see across the bay to the far side. There was only one light on the wall where I stood and as I looked back the twenty-five yards to the shore I could hardly see the beach at all. It was like being on a buoy in the middle of the channel except that you couldn't feel the water under you. I had swum the half mile across the bay earlier in the evening because I wanted to see my brother and I was afraid to take our boat without permission. I didn't know what I would do when I found him, maybe hit him or embarrass him or just make him know I was there. But I had been on the main island three hours and I hadn't started looking for him yet. I was afraid since I had never come over to the main island before without

telling anyone and though I had swum the channel many times in day never before had I done it at night and I thought I was drunk. In Bermuda anyone could buy liquor but I was only fifteen and had never been in a bar at all so I bought five St. Pauli Girls from Mrs. Sanfar who sold beer every day on the colored beach. I drank them all sitting on the edge of the concrete wall, throwing each green bottle far out beyond my circle of light into the new deeper green of the ocean. I had been there drinking a couple of hours and the beer was holding the anger in me. Anger which would have gone and left alone, but now, fed with alcohol and dizziness was stronger than ever. So I decided I would find my brother and pound his head and break his neck and take his girl who probably hated me too. And then maybe things would be all right, but that wasn't true so I shouted at him, as far out toward my house as I could,

"You're a bastard, Tom Randolph, you hurt, you hurt." And then softer, "No one can even tell you to be kind anymore."

I don't think I was crying. I felt fairly good because the night was warm and my swim suit and shirt were beginning to dry and so I got up and very slowly walked back along the wall to the shore and the road.

Tom had never liked me much at all. I was

smarter but he was much stronger and he was the one going to prep school in New England, so I didn't see how it much mattered. But, he thought I got in the way and I probably did even though I only saw him two months out of the year now.

I talked to my father a lot about Tom, but with him everyone was just going through a stage and that didn't help me at the moment. My father was a chemical engineer who liked to skin dive, so we lived in Bermuda, where my mother was from, most of the year. We officially lived on Cape Cod, Mass., but we didn't go there much anymore. My parents had wanted to send me off to school, too, but I loved the island and said I wouldn't go, and they didn't make me. So we lived out in the Atlantic, and I was brown most of the year, and we all played soccer very well.

I left the road and walked through the grass, between the gnarled pine trees to the beach. I knew he would be there with his girl and his friends because they came down to the beach and all got drunk together almost every night when there wasn't a party. Tom was going to college in the Fall so he didn't have to come home at any time at night, not at all if he didn't want to. The sand was cool and soft and it clung to my feet and legs as I stumbled toward the blankets and beach chairs and my brother. I saw him and he was with Retha who, with her green eyes and hair the color of burnt wheat, sat beside him on the blanket, her head resting on his shoulder. Retha was beautiful and English and though she was almost twenty she loved Tom more than almost anyone ever had. I had always been infatuated with her and once when I was twelve I had tried to be gallant and fight Tom because he had been rude to her, but he just knocked me down and walked back into the house. And so, I walked up to them very slowly and stood silently behind them, watching.

"Hey, Tom," I said finally.

"What! Ramblen, what the hell are you doing here? Do you know what time it is? Does Dad know where you are?"

"Want to talk to you, Tom. Swam over. Want to talk to you."

"Oh goddamn, he's drunk out of his mind. I can't believe it."

"Lo Retha. I need talk to Tom, very important. Everybody very upset."

"Hello Ramblen," she said. "Do you feel all right? Aren't you cold?"

"Not cold, everything warm. Tom, you're bastard, really, really." Then before he could say anything, I jumped on him, catching him off guard and we rolled off the blanket into the sand. We fought until he was sitting on me with my arms pinned back behind my head.

"Okay, Ramblen, okay. Retha I'm going to walk him around awhile and then take him home. You have your car, don't you?"

"Yes, it's over in the lot."

"Oh, that's right. I'll just take the boat and get him to the house. They'll really go berserk if they see him like this. Here, I'll help you with the stuff. You stay put, Ramblen."

"All right," she said. "Do you need any help with him?"

"No, I think I can handle him now."

I sat up in the sand and watched as they folded up the blanket and picked up their other belongings.

"I'll be right back," Tom said, as they started back up the beach to the parking lot.

"Good night, Ramblen," Retha said. "Don't leave until Tom gets back."

"Okay, bye Retha, hurry." I lay back in the sand and looked for the stars. The other people on the beach were farther away, so I don't think they had seen me, but Tom and Retha went over to speak to them before heading toward the car.

The night was still warm, but I was beginning to get cold. I sat up and hugging my knees tightly to my chest I looked across the bay toward home. I thought about summer before last when we were in Florida with our father for two weeks while he was buying a new chemical plant. Tom accepted me then, before he got to know anyone else and I felt great when we would go riding in the car.

The sun was almost white against the bleached sky, melting the asphalt highway into heat waves and glimmering pools in the distance. We rode through long corridors of fruit trees, green shrubs dotted with orange and gold. The soil beside the road was only sand, grayish white, heavy, slowing.

"Let's stop and get some fruit," Tom said.

"Don't you think they've been poisoned?"

"Probably, but we aren't going to eat the skins."

A bare foot on a worn brake pedal and a small, out of place yellow car slowed to a stop beside straight rows of grapefruit trees. Creosoted wooden sentinels, sharpened strands of barbed wire between them, stood in a straight line, the length of the field. We crossed the fence and walked into the field. Tom took off his T-shirt, fashioning it into a bag to carry the fruit. The soil was dry and cracked under our feet, the hot sand sifting between our toes.

"Let's fill the shirt up," Tom said. "I think I could eat grapefruit forever." And he began to twist the yellow fruit from the branches.

"Okay, why don't we get enough so we can take some to Dad?" We can say we bought them at one of those roadside stands."

It was later in the morning and we rode down a highway bordered by white sand, small palms, and faded palmetto. A solitary man rode along the shoulder on an old, fenderless rusted bike. His greasy, salt and pepper hair was matted against his head. He wore a dark brown double-breasted coat and cut-off blue jeans. As the car passed I flicked a grapefruit pulp over the open side. The pulp caught the man in the back of the neck and he started to swerve across the road, but stopped himself, swerving the other way into a sandy ditch. We sat quietly glancing into the mirror at the man's disappearing form.

"Man, you've got to watch that," Tom said.

"Yeah, I know. I'm glad a car wasn't coming." I was very afraid.

I looked up as Tom sat down beside me.

"How do you feel, little brother?" he asked.

"You better be glad Retha left," I said. "I'm going to pound your head, cause you don't have any feelings. I'm going to throw you in the water and drown you."

"I thought that was why you were over here. What have you been drinking? I don't think you've ever had this much."

"Bought from Mrs. Sanfar, you don't know her. You don't even live here anymore, Tom. You don't know anybody anymore. But you can't say things to Mother like that, you're not here, you don't know."

"Don't worry, Ramblen. I called Mother at Retha's house and talked to her for two hours. She explained everything to me, I was going back over there, but she said to stay over here and bring you home in

case you showed up with Axal. Everything's all right, because I understand what's been going on now. I'm sorry if you got upset. It's my fault, I shouldn't have gotten mad at her the way I did."

"Goddamn, Tom, I don't know what's going on now. You can't say things like that to Mother. She's having a hard time."

"I know, man." He started to put his arm around my shoulders, but I stood up, almost falling and catching myself on his shoulder.

"God, am I drunk," I said. He got up and we walked down toward the water. He laughed.

"Did you really swim over here?"

"Yes, lots of fun."

"Why didn't you take the little boat?"

"Don't know, didn't feel like it."

"You're really crazy. I can't believe you."

"Neither can I. Do you really hate me, Tom?"

"What, do I really hate you? Come on, Ramblen, let's go, you're in the bag. I think you're going to have to sleep pretty late tomorrow. You know I don't hate you."

"But you always have. You never talk to me. You just go out with Retha and go off to school and nobody ever sees you anymore. What's wrong with your family, "we're still right here, we aren't going anywhere, we aren't changing. What's the matter with you?"

"Ramblen, what can I say to you? I can't explain. I'm eighteen and things do change. You're right, I go off to school, I don't live on the island anymore. But, aren't we talking now?"

"Hell, I'm drunk and I found you."

"Yes, that's right, you did, but I don't think that matters. Aren't you ready to go home? I think we both need some sleep."

"All right, I'll go, but I'm going to talk to you again when I'm sober."

"Okay, brother."

We walked down the beach toward the boat. The night was cooler now and the moon had gone below the horizon. The only sounds were the soft rattle of the wind in the pine trees and the white flecked dark of the ocean finding the warmth of the footprinted sand. I was beginning to understand because I knew Tom told the truth and he was right, but I was still

too young. But I could see how things were when I was much younger, and now and even when I would be older. I could look back, now and forward too, into a year when walking backwards would slow down time, when Indian scouts hid behind sculptured hedges,

and chocolate tasted best if you let it melt a little in your pocket first. And a small boy and his brother sat on wooded bank and gazing into the lilled pool smiled twice. Listening for a sound in twilight Autumn, with scent of curling honeysuckle in the air.



Aden Field

TESTAMENT

I hate the ambiguous caress,
I mean, the quite natural touch, here—
thus, beside a milling crowd, the willing victim
of closeness, and heedless pushing,
crowded between a figured tapestry
and the passing flux of invited guests,
I brush against a lovely arm, without reprimand.

I cannot catch the pleasure in that secret touch;
though I suspect it must lie most
in the sharing of the secret,
where canny hiding hides a common memory,
and the same dream of a future night.
Those are graceful, stately pleasures, and belong,
I reckon, to a certain state of grace.

But mine is a literary person, hardly fair,
a glow in the eyes of a nobly conscious passion,
the arms thin, the legs two stalks,
the hair a brindle no-color,
and words always between the dry lips.

Such is the courtship that I maintain, talking.

My lover sits at her lover's side,
her arm is linked, bound in his,
his fingers brush lightly the soft hairs
on the back of her relaxing hand.

They listen both, as I shake my awkward
bird's neck above a cup of coffee, talking still,
near the slow flickering of her lover's
jealous eyes a-shimmer in the liquid.

His noble-seeming rage gives me no comfort.
He rapes her every noble night,
as I go prating to a new cafe.
I say, as I tip forward intently,
and look into her gray eyes,
and tap one finger on her satin-covered knee—

I dramatize every person's dreams,
and make the world acceptable
to disenchanted mankind.
I am the whispered hope given persuasion,
and the sweet persuasion given elegance of form,
melody of language, gravity of truth.
Reality becomes in my work the ferment of Purpose;
the Design approaches its perfect term,
and glories play upon the face of delighted men.

But, I said, I have a new feeling now.
It is a bitter-sweet mood that begs your tolerance.
My genius has found a new subject,
for which the elegance of my older work
was a trivial but essential preparation. Listen:

The lineaments of joy remain inscrutable,
a repose of doubtful intention
and all-potential sweetness.

Her satin knees quivered. Her hand stirred.
I was quoting from memory.
I was looking into her eyes, intently.
His coffee stirred coils of light around a spoon.
I do not understand, she said.
You must begin again.

The lineaments of joy remain inscrutable,
a repose of doubtful intention
and all-potential sweetness.
But, to throw off my enigmatic phrase,
I love one who does not know it, or care.

TIME PASSES

From the subject's diary:

Noon, 26 July: . . . It has begun. At least I won't be uncomfortable during my month, but I won't exactly be in the lap of luxury either. The furniture in here (one cot, and a table) is positively Spartan. And the toilet and sink are straight mail-order. . . . The only other item is a clock, about five feet high, on the wall opposite my desk. That makes it easy; I'll be able to write down the time while I look at it . . .

Seven PM, 26 July: . . . I just discovered two small receptacles; good. Now I know how I'm supposed to get food and new books. Apparently they hear everything I say, and place the items I ask for in their door of the receptacle. Funny—I didn't get the crossword puzzles I wanted, or *Huckleberry Finn*, but I did get my *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. At last I have time to wade through it . . . Dinner was good . . .

3 AM, 27 July: . . . I have been trying for hours to figure out a way to darken the room, but no luck. The ceiling just seems to glow. And when I try to get some sleep, the clock seems to hum louder . . .

6 PM, August 2: . . . The crossword puzzles finally came, and I have worked them until I thought I would split. I just can't seem to get into volume II of the *Decline and Fall*. And I've stopped at page 538 of *The Grand Alliance*. I wish they'd give me shorter books. It would make the month so much easier to pass . . .

2:30 AM, August 4th: . . . my schedule is all wrong. At this hour I should be sleeping, but I can't. I try to read, but I have to give up after about five minutes. Then I get some water from the tap. That takes about 25 seconds. Using the toilet takes longer, sometimes as much as three minutes. Sometimes I doze, 10 or 15 minutes at a time . . . The time is passing very slowly now . . .

4:15 PM, August 5th: . . . I can't even read at all anymore. Print sickens me. When I'm not sleeping, I can stare for hours at a book cover, the wall, my feet, or the clock . . .

5:15 AM, August 6th, 1966: . . . Wonderful! They gave me some other books today! I can read again! Now I have (besides a new *Life*, dated the 29th) *The Wind In The Willows*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and some of my favorite old westerns, what wonderful books they are . . .

10:57 AM, August 10th, 1966: . . . Something strange just happened. As I was reading *Donald Duck*, I distinctly heard something click from the direction of the clock. But it's still running. The only thing is, I started *Donald* at 9:30 and it has never taken me an hour to finish a comic book . . .

12:03:30 PM, August 13th, 1966: . . . It has done it again. Clicked. Never when I'm looking at it

though, just when I'm reading, every time I read. And then when I look at the clock, it seems as if a lot less time has gone by than it shows . . .

8:57:17 AM, August 20th, 1966: . . . the clock still clicks, but I think I know why and why it only clicks when I am reading and why I thought I had been getting so much sleep, eight to ten hours of it then eight to ten hours of work . . . They run it ahead when I am not looking. I can't let them do that! I will watch very carefully as I read . . .

11:38:17 AM, August 21st, 1966 AD: . . . They are very clever, you know, because they won't let me read and look at the Clock at the same time. I must turn my back and read for about 5 minutes, only then do I hear the click. Sometimes the clock shows 5, maybe 15, maybe 30 minutes have passed . . .

10:53:23 AM, August the 23rd, 1966 AD: . . . I just realized that since the Clock is wrong, my diary's times are wrong too; but not much. I have been too careful and have watched closely since I do not read very much anymore, again. They will not get away with it anymore unless it is in my sleep, I am too smart for them . . . Surely my calculation of the days is right anyway . . .

3:58:35 AM, August the 24th, Nineteen Sixty-Six AD: . . . It is so hard to stay awake and watch but if I do not it will move ahead and I can't let it. I must stay till the Twenty-sixth. I do not read the books anymore at all . . .

5:08:42 PM, August the Twenty-Fourth, Nineteen Sixty-Six AD: . . . less than two days to go now I don't know how I can stand it. There is nothing to do in here I can't read or work crossword puzzles because when I do It clicks. I can't let It move ahead. So I watch and write and the second hand goes around and around it starts at the 12 and just barely begins to fall over always to the right and passing through the one, then it leans over hits the two and falls down so slowfast on the three that it strikes the four before it is pulled to the side and hitting five comes to rest at the 6. But not rest. But not rest. It keeps going and smashes through the 7 then straining pulverizes the eight then the part I like best where it rips through the underbelly of the 9-10-eleven like a sharp knife and its guts go spilling out while the mighty arm goes on to caress the 12 and start again. But I have won a victory over the Clock that because another minute is gone forever I am that much nearer to getting out . . .

8:18:33 AM, August the Twenty-Sixth, Anno Domini Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-Six: . . . do you know when The Clock is vulnerable? it is when it's 8:18:33 AM or PM i figured it out because that is when the hands that is the big or minute hand and the little or hour hand are equal distances from the 12 and also equal distances from the six i don't know what the angle is but as you can see Its hands are both down and It is defenseless, jewellers know this they live around Clocks so they set them all at 8:18:33 AM and also PM so they won't be controlled by them . . . at 8:18:33 AM or PM either one i have control over The Clock and It can't dominate me anyway the month is almost over and i will have won . . .

12:00:00 Meridian, Eastern Standard Time, Friday, the Twenty-Sixth of August, In the Year of Our Clock Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-Six: . . . and i have won because i could have gotten out any time just by saying let me out please but i didn't . . . it is over . . .

For a long time the only sound in the recovery room was the subject's watch ticking. Then Dr. Tritten spoke again to the vacant back of the figure on the bed. "Alfred, I wish you'd look at it this way. You did stay in there two whole days longer than anyone else."

A slight pause, then flatly, "How long."

"You were in ten days. You should be proud."

"But The Clock said . . ."

"The clock was wrong. We fiddled with it in your sleep before we shut it off entirely."

"Oh . . . Shut it off . . ."

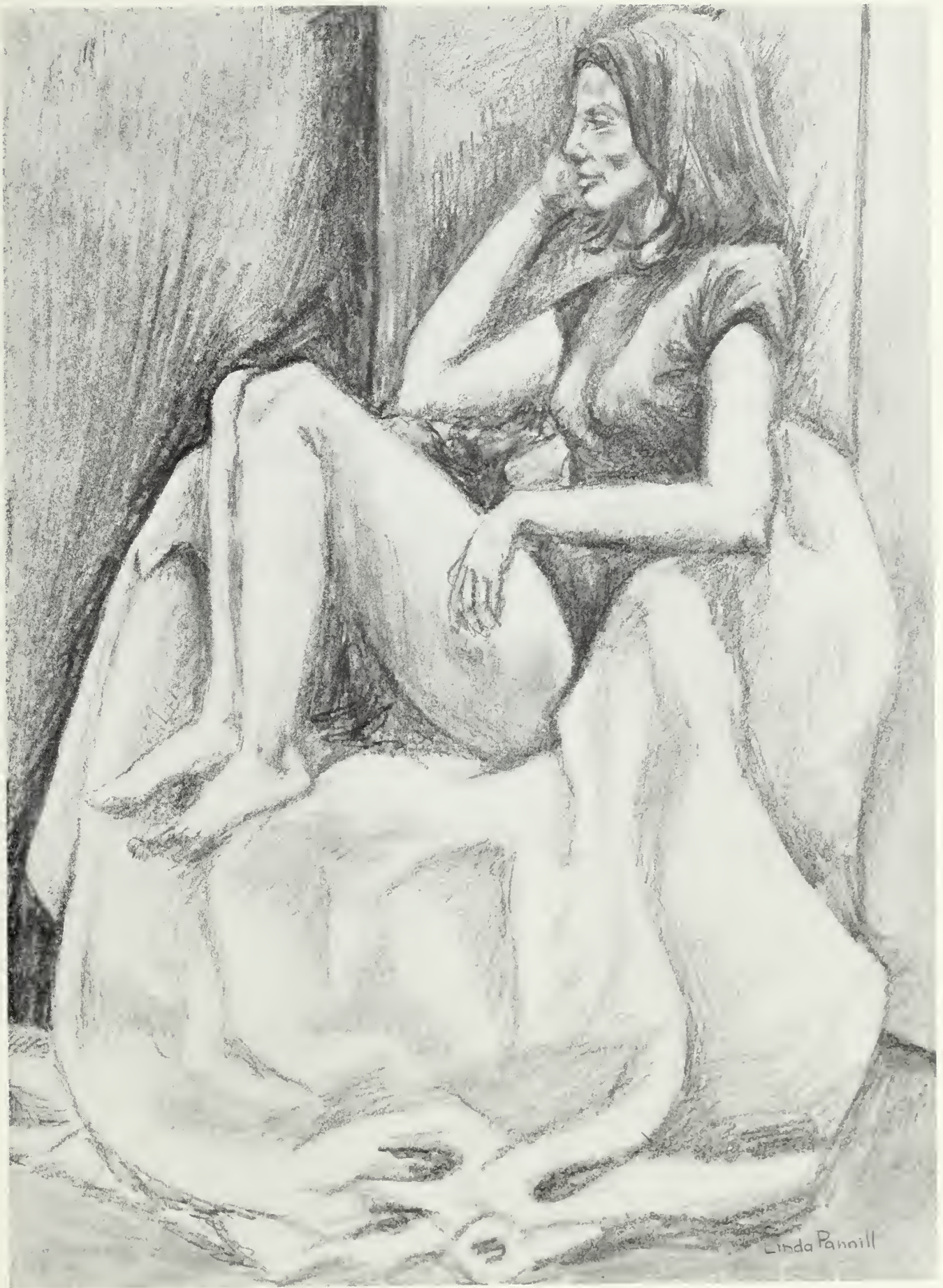
"Yes. On your third day. I haven't read your diary yet, but you must have noticed that it stopped. It should have made a loud click when we did it, anyway."

Alfred did not answer.

Tritten got up to leave the room. At the door he hesitated, chewing his inner cheek a little. Alfred continued to stare at the wall, his back to the door. Tritten said gently, "Alfred, I want you to understand . . . you didn't fail. You taught us a lot. Things that will help us to . . . things we needed to know. Don't be upset. You helped us a lot. Really."

"I'm not upset."

Then, because there might have been something to say but he did not know how to say it, Tritten left the room. Alfred didn't even know he was gone as he lay there facing the wall, his tearful face glowing in reverential joy at the face of the great big, silent, All-powerful clock on the wall of his new room.



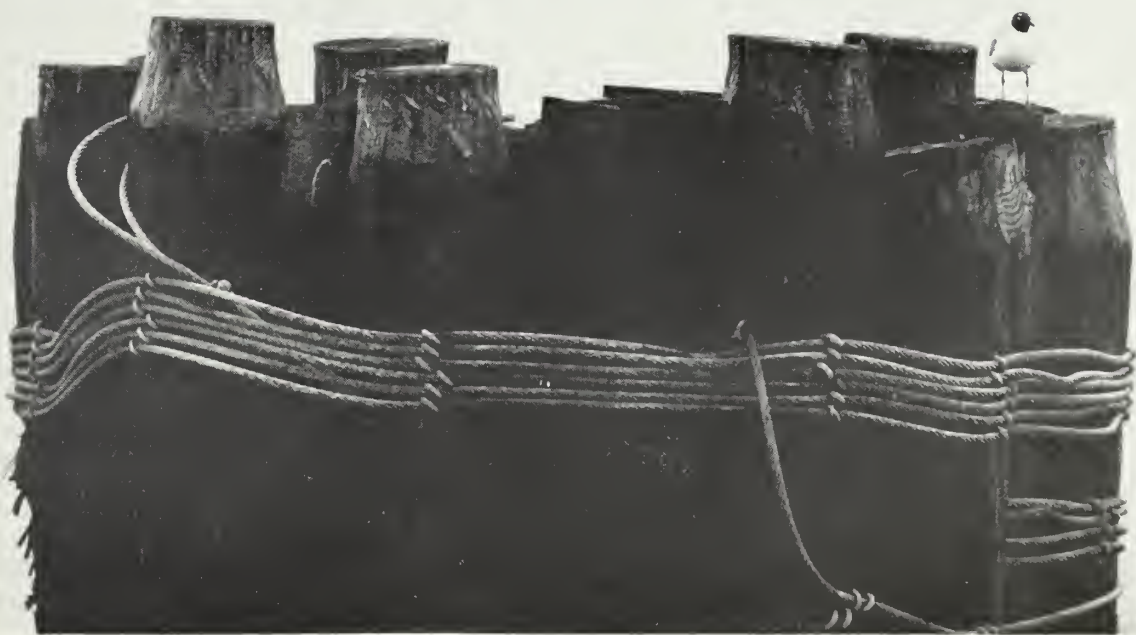




On such mist--laden evenings
as these
the fog-lost lake birds
swoop briefly
out of heaven's gray opacity
and
finding no lake
finding only the dim outlines
of a world
claustal and gray
ascend again
into the fading pale insistence
of the sun.

J. K. White







A SUNDAY MORNING DRIVE

Patrick Sciel was starring in another of his own dreams. He strode through forests and cities with long legs, and everything was in his mind at once. Nothing burdened his absolute strength. His power wanted to fly away, as it did often. It often woke him up.

This morning his awakening was the November sun through the east window of his bedroom. He jumped out of bed immediately with hardly a groan.

It was the end of his holiday. He was fully awake, even curling his toes nervously, as he strode from his room into the hall. A shaft of the warm light fell on the door of his parents' bedroom, and he stopped motion a moment to look at the motes silently swimming in it. He burrowed his toes into the thick rug, and grinned. Was he not comfortable, and was he not cool, and had not last night been a blast?

He decided he'd better rinse out his mouth again, and stepped into the bathroom. What a vacation! He looked at his watch, 8:18. The water soaked into his dry tongue and ran deliciously down his cotton-coated throat.

His head ached slightly at its back base, the spot where his hair always revealed first its need of a cutting. That was its message now, unread. In fact, he hardly even looked at himself. He was apprehensive. No time to waste, so he entered his parents' room where both slept soundly.

"Mother," he called in a normal voice, magnified in the silence.

She rolled over, and sat up with very little waste motion. Her first words were equally to the point. "How are you getting to New York, son?"

His heart shifted gear. He ran his hand through his hair, unconsciously trying to flatten it into a more respectable appearance. "How *am* I getting to New York, Ma?" His voice's casual innocence sounded fake, he knew.

She also knew. "You mean you don't know?"

His Father sat up, too. He had been listening. "You don't know how you're getting back to New York?"

"No, Sir. I thought when Chuck didn't call last night, you'd make reservations for me on something."

"I told you, you should have stayed home last night, Patrick." Mrs. Sciel had a gentle way of nagging. She knew her boy was in for some verbal abuse.

"I have told you four times in the past week, boy, not to put this off until the last minute." Mr. Sciel was burning up. "I also told you more than once to call Chuck, not to leave it up to chance. It was your *responsibility!*"

That was one word Pat was sick of. He hadn't had time to call Chuck. His Father sure slung a lot of bull.

"You arrange these things for yourself. You're not a little child anymore."

Well then, why was he nagged like one?

"Well, I guess I'll call the train station then," announced Pat, not looking either elder in the eye.

His Father snorted. He was all business. "When do you have to be there?"

"I'm not sure."

"1:30," his Mother offered as unobtrusively as possible.

"Where do you have to be?"

"Kennedy Air Port."

"Where at Kennedy?"

"Some terminal named General Aviation."

"I've never heard of that one. Neither has anyone else probably." Mr. Sciel thought for a few seconds. "Do you remember how to get there?"

Pat pretended to think for a minute. "No. Not exactly." He never noticed where he was going in a car, only the scenery.

"It's 8:25 now," calculated Mr. Sciel. "You have to be there at 1:30. It's too late to get on a plane now." It was the Sunday ending Thanksgiving holidays, and with the war on in Vietnam, everyone was travel-

ling. "A train won't get you there in time, either. Neither will a bus. Hmm."

Pat began to realize his dilemma. "I could hitch hike," he said.

His Father coughed with humorless laughter. "You'd probably end up in White Plains."

God, his Father was sarcastic.

"Chuck's not calling means you can't ride with him?"

Pat replied, "He said if he didn't call, it would mean he left a day early."

There was a long dead stillness, punctuated only by the ticking of the clock radio next to Mrs. Sciel's bed. No one looked at anyone else. Pat was engrossed in the sunlight pattern on the rug. His Father finally spoke with distaste. "I'll have to drive you."

"Oh, you don't have to do that." Said Pat automatically.

"How else can you possibly get there?"

Pat had nothing brilliant to suggest.

"Well, it's 8:30 now. Let's get going. We'd better be on the road in fifteen minutes."

"I'm all packed." At least Pat could say that. If his Father wanted to do it this way, he couldn't complain. He went to the bathroom to wash up and shave.

It was quarter to nine when Mr. Sciel pulled his green cadillac out onto the hurrying beltway, Route 128, around Boston, and eased it up to 65 miles per hour. "Fasten your seat belt," he instructed.

"Won't they wait at least a little while for me if I'm not on time?" Asked Pat.

"Would you want that?" Asked his Father. "To make fifty of your friends wait and just sit there doing nothing, just because of your irresponsibility."

There was that word again, damn it. "No. I guess not." Pat had to admit it. "It's nine now." He changed the subject. "Let's hear the news."

Mr. Sciel stated, "It will take us over four hours from this spot just to get there. He grimly pointed out, "We probably won't make it."

Pat was listening to the news about some Waterbury teenagers who the night before had driven a car off a cliff on the way home from a party. They had been drinking. One of them had been a frosh, too, like Patrick Sciel. Patrick really felt sorry for him. He wondered if the boy had been doing well at school, and if he had a girl. Pat could see it happening to him, or Mike, or Hank, or any of his friends. Bob had come close last winter. Inconceivably horrible.

"Isn't that a shame." said Mr. Sciel.

"Horrible," murmured Pat, "Just . . ." He grimaced. He thought about it, and many minutes passed. Maybe the plane would crash . . .

"Worcester," said his Father.

"Huh?"

"We're passing the Worcester exit." He had Pat's attention, and began another lecture. "Something like this charter flight is an example of something that requires complete co-operation."

Pat could see how his Father was a success. He could really, really sling the old bull.

Mr. Sciel continued, "You just take a look at the fare and say 'Great,' and run and sign up with all your customary youth and vigor." He was staring straight ahead at the road as he talked, passing everyone in sight, driving hard in the effortless style of owners of his particular make of car. "Now, I'm certainly not saying that you shouldn't take advantage of a thing like this. I'm only saying that when you take on things like this . . . or that job you lost last summer, about those magazines . . . you take on a lot of details and responsibilities that you can't ignore. Every one has to be on time, or be willing to take their medicine."

Patrick nodded automatically assent. They drove on.

The ten o'clock news was on the radio when they took the Sturbridge exit, marked by the monumentally huge sign for NYC. It must have been the largest road sign in the country. His Father went seventy-five on the new road. A few clouds had drifted into the sky, and the Connecticut landscape seemed lifeless to Pat. He didn't know why. Maybe it had something to do with his headache. The Hartford skyline came up on the right and disappeared behind. Pat thought of Tina what-was-her-last-name who he'd picked up at the Newport folk festival that past summer. What was her name?

"If we don't make it, you're the one who's going to lose money. And you deserve it."

Pat wasn't listening. They drove on.

"What time is it?" asked Mr. Sciel.

Pat was listening to the Rolling Stones on the radio and smiled at a double entendre in the music. Then he noticed his Father looking at him and dropped his head, removing the smile. "Yes sir." He mumbled.

"'Yes sir' what?" Snapped Mr. Sciel. "I asked you a question. What time is it?"

"Ten fifty," answered Pat.

"Good. We're on schedule." He reached over and snapped off the radio. "Garbage!" He whistled a tune in its vacuum, one of his old favorites. Pat made a face. The car purred on.

Mr. Sciel spoke, "The more I think about it, son, the harder it is for me to understand you."

Why did he have to try? thought Pat.

Mr. Sciel continued, "You're so irresponsible, I can't believe you're the same sweet, beautiful, intelligent

baby your Mother and I raised. I still can't understand how you could have forgotten to take care of this."

"It was my first vacation home ever, after fifty-six days away." He let it sink in. "I thought you'd take care of it. I was busy all vacation." Pat was not apologetic. "I only had six days."

His Father sighed. "Only six days of complete vacation. What do you think I was doing those six days? Working . . . to make money for you. I told you four times to take care of it."

"I only heard you once."

"Four times, and *still* you didn't do it." Mr. Sciel said it to himself. Pat was engrossed in looking at the clouds and thinking of words to describe them. They were ribbed grey clouds, like a washboard, touched yellow by the sun. "A washboard of cirrus clouds" he thought. They were "combed."

Mr. Sciel knew what was wrong with his son, he just couldn't communicate it to him. "You just ignore responsibility. That's all it comes down to. You give me your earnings and expect me to invest them. Small as they are."

Pat smiled. The clouds were "tiered."

"You take every comfort for granted."

They were "streaked."

"Did you know that you're insured for three hundred thousand dollars?"

The "smudging exhaust streams of one thousand jets."

"You even make your Mother set up your dentist appointments for you."

"I never made anybody do anything," muttered Pat.

They stopped for gas east of New Haven at a quiet service station. The gas station's clock said 11:37. Pat's was one minute fast. He didn't reset it. He offered to drive some and his Father permitted him. After some miles, they passed the signs for Stamford and Bridgeport. Outside of Bridgeport, the news came on the radio again about the Waterbury teenagers. Mr. Sciel frowned, "It's only noon, and I've already heard that four times. I don't think I'll listen on the way back."

"That'll make quite a drive for one day for you, won't it, Pop?" asked Pat without thinking the least about his words.

"I'll Make it."

Pat wished the vacation could go right on through to Christmas and New Year's. She hadn't been kidding in those letters. His mind stopped to rest comfortably on the thought of his date the night before and the other dates on the other nights, all with Ginny. She had really changed. He guessed it was because he

was a man now in her eyes and not a boy any more. "College man. Yeah!"

"Are you looking forward to going back, son?" his Father asked. "It looks like we'll make it." The words interrupted Pat's thoughts.

"Huh? Oh yeah. It's okay."

"I hope you're planning to bring those grades up."

"Yeah. I think I will."

"You'd better. You can do *much* better than you did last midterm."

"Yeah. I should be able to do better."

"Are you going to get into some activity when you get back?"

"Well, I don't know if I'll have time, but I want to."

"You *do* want to. I can tell you that right now. You'll be glad you did later on." He explained why. "First you get into something and just do the lowly work, but it gives you a feeling of accomplishment." He glanced at his son for response. "You feel fine when you're done with it all."

"Yeah."

"Then you move up, and when you get a little older, you get a better position, with no more work, but all the glory."

"Uh, huh."

"But you need to be repsonsible in those posts. You'll learn responsibility from them."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you have one in mind, Pat?"

Pat didn't. "Yeah," he replied. He retreated again into his thoughts. His poor Dad. He loved him. And he was good, in his own field. And he had class. But he didn't know how to have fun. He was so straight, that Pat couldn't believe he was his son, sometimes. He wished the old man wouldn't be so obnoxious about things, too, just because they happened to think different. If his Father wanted to be a slave to details his whole life, and never really live, Patrick couldn't do anything about it.

"What time is it?" Mr. Sciel inquired.

What did his Father care? They made it or they didn't. It was out of their hands now. "12:40," he replied. In a few minutes, they would cross the border into New York state. "We'll be there in a little more than half an hour if things go right." He offered it helpfully.

"That leaves us about ten minutes to find General Aviation. I hope we make it, Buddy, for your sake."

"Yeah," said Pat.

"If you miss the flight, you'll pay your own fare."

"I will!" said Patrick quietly, an unflinching martyr. He would write a check from his expense account. They were coming into the outskirts of the Bronx,

and a wind had swept up with a nip in it. Pat watched a football game of very young lower class children, and then an old woman walking bundled down a side street very slowly. The city seemed empty even for a Sunday afternoon. Everything was so shabby, Patricius observed, and he felt like a young aristocrat in his Father's gleaming expensive chariot. He had the seeds of greatness.

He glanced at his expensive timepiece. Ten past one. They turned left at a sign KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

"We'll be there in ten minutes," announced Mr. Sciel. "Kind of cutting it close, wouldn't you say?"

Pat had to admit it. "Yes, sir." Then quickly, "Take a right here, Dad." He was pleased with his contribution. His Father had already signalled.

They parked, and Pat, lugging the two bags followed his Father into the main terminal of Eastern Air Lines. It was 1:20. They obtained quick directions and de-

cided to walk it. Mr. Sciel tried to take one of the suitcases, but Patrick wouldn't allow him. He would do his part.

They passed through crowds of people and down a sidewalk and two corridors, stopping only once to catch breath. At 1:25 they came into the huge bare room labelled General Aviation. "We made it, Dad." Pat beamed.

"Right this way, sir," an attendant directed him and took his bags.

The young prince shook hands with his Father and loped gracefully out into the windy sunlight. He turned only once to wave and sprang up the steps to the plane, the wind ruffling his hair. He was the last aboard.

He settled into a seat next to the best looking girl he could find. He turned and gave her a winning smile. "It's one thirty," he said. "I knew they'd wait for me."

Al Bragg

jm's Swansong

I

Behold

the small
insolent red-god war

aloft inane humanity clattering
a bloodred son on
a blood day
red
to oversee
the shapless hue
rotting
of

empty clothing bleeding
in the malaria-breeding
Jungle.

Now-and-again
the inane flesh
hurls rattling subway-tokens
of its
witless existence
in the death-crucible's
insane
howling
womb
(of strife-smolten
tragedy reamed.)

*dancing the solemn dance they die
sacrificial mist to a hostile sky.*

destiny for an instant
tolls a chosen one
a choking scarlet-spot
in a violent
grinning sun

were there a god would he have
let this blood-progression grow
and let yet one more domino
to the cold floor clatter?
(or did it matter
to the smelters of the smoking
steel
which wrought forth rattling
thirtyfold silver
in the frothing wake of
youth—
blood's carmine pool?)

spring again
gore-sated wondergrass
in the corner nursery secreted
under the sod
conceal the crease
and the scar of armed high noon
(lightning unleashed a hundred suns
in fate-hurled august)

II

i gaze soft beneath the grey-green gloom
stranded lone in some dim cathedral room
awed by the gothic-woven vine
clutched warm by dark-breathing Leda

(bright lit a quiet dove on a fickle branch;
glowing

presence gleam
(apparition)
in the dark pattern's
dim question)

*as a child who after illusion grieves
i struggle into the thicket leaves*

where soft
cries the
dove
lamenting, *Ea subit*

i struggle; wrenching clambering grasping
(slipping falling)
urged under by the eager ember-child
of Mars

her goat-hooves cleaving
(the dove-silence fled)
she coaxes me through the licking flames

into the darkfiery depths
of her hot
hollow softness

up-up-up
to black
n-n-nothing

III

faltering minds of mortal
straw
or shuddering
breezes in
an already-empty wind

*dancing the solemn dance they die
sacrificial mist to a hostile sky*

how many scrawny strangermen
must heave and retch
on a rough-hewn cross
strung to a sun scorched
calvary

before jm
can comprehend
the folly of
the central Me?



Reflections on Yeats' "Lapis Lazuli"

I

When Steinberg evolved that measure, that surge
Of death, *Cortège* and *marcia funèbre*, wound
In that whine, he rode the ravenous dirge,
And knew a ruthless joy in all that sound,
For had he slowed to weep or shown some pain,
The fiddlers were undone before that scene.

II

That last tormented summer, drone and blaze,
Dying the dull, dismantling death,
He met his freinds in old hilarious ways,
Recalled embraces, raptures, drank to health.
Beggared at sight of what time slays,
They might have wept for destined, faltering breath,
But he with mirth enthralled impending night.
The man had found no comfort in their fright.

III

Those scenes that stirred a pang,
Such havoc as the desolate
Funeral measure sang,
The undertow of fate
That pulled a father down,
Must seem a mere example
Of tragedian's renown,
Not agonies that trample
All my rage and make
A woman's whimperings mine.
One moment must I slake
The tide of all that brine
Of tears, one hour rehearse
This bitter show of verse.

A TIME TO KEEP SILENCE, AND A TIME TO SPEAK

"You'll have to hurry if you want to see him today," the nurse said. "He's been having trouble staying awake."

I walked down the hospital corridor, noticing the black and white tiles of the floor. An old man in a wheel chair was pushed slowly down the hall by a Negro attendant. The patient's head was bandaged, and the backs of his hands were dotted with dried blood. He spoke rapidly to the Negro. "My boy Jim," he chattered, "he comes to see me 'bout near every day." "Say he does?" the attendant answered laconically. "No," said the old man, shaking his head slowly, "but I wisht he would."

I stopped for a moment outside my uncle's room, mentally listing the rules I had made or been given for this visit. "Don't stay too long." "Don't upset him." "Don't get upset yourself. Don't cry." My own rule, "Try not to lie to him," but with it the absolute command: "You must not tell him the truth." The subject, then, was to be avoided. But what, I thought, will I do if he asks me for the truth? What will I say if he asks me "Am I going to die?"

"You may go in now," the nurse said, "but only for a few minutes this time: he's very sleepy."

I stepped into the room: it was quite small, painted a pale green. My uncle's bed fitted into the L-shape of the walls as an Egyptian sarcophagus fits neatly into its niche in a museum: he was on display. His hand was surprisingly warm when I touched it—for some reason I had expected him to be already cold—and it closed firmly round mine. "How are you, Uncle Philip?" I asked, implying the lie I was not willing to speak out loud.

"I'm very sick, Carol," he said, and I knew with a sudden terrible clarity what I had known but not believed before: that this tanned, crew-cut young man, the "baby" of my mother's family, was dying; that each day now would be like days marked off a calendar, signifying the approach of some other, special day which must come. I looked down at the man in the bed; his eyes were fixed on a point about two feet below the line where wall and ceiling joined at the foot of his bed: at least they were fixed there if they saw anything inside himself. I wondered, for they seemed transparent, like the most delicate glass; I was afraid to look more closely at them, for fear I would see inside.

"How are they treating you here?" I asked, feeling compelled to say something, no matter how inane. I had no hope now of being able to parry any questions; there had been something in that tired, husky voice that precluded any dependence on semantics. If he had said to me in that moment, "Carol, am I dying?" I could not even have hesitated: I would have had to say, "yes."

He did not ask, however: he began to tell me how he was being cared for. The hospital staff were all very kind; he had worked there with them before his illness and therefore knew many of them; they showed him every consideration. He was not completely happy with his room, though; it was too small, too hot—he had preferred the room he had been in before. I listened, not to his words but to the painful rasping of his voice. The window beside his bed was open, and sunlight shone on the Veteran's Hospital lawns. The circular drive in front of the main entrance

was lined with cars: most of them seemed to be either white or blue—I supposed those must be the most popular colors this year. My uncle lay very still in his bed: Oh God, I thought, what can I say to him now? I willed myself to look away from the sunlight. “I guess it must get pretty hot in here in the afternoons,” I said, and then realized that he had just been taking of the heat. He nodded, and raised his head slightly so that I could feel the dampness of his pillow. I put out a hand to support him, for he looked fragile, brittle: my mother had told me that he hoped to be out of the hospital in time to begin the hunting season, but even had I been ignorant of his condition, the idea of those matchstick fingers supporting a gun would have been hopelessly incongruous. “Do you watch TV?” I asked, glancing at a portable television set which rested on a sort of high metal table near the foot of the bed. “No,” he said, “not much now.” I continued

to look at the television set: it was quite small, perhaps eighteen inches long by eight or ten inches high. “I don’t feel like watching it very much,” he said. “because I get too sleepy.” The set was beige or tan—some light brown shade; rather like the color of chocolate ice cream, but slightly paler. “Of course it’s the medicine that makes me sleep so much,” my uncle said.

I looked at him again. My first sight of him had not shocked me so much as I had expected: true, he was much thinner than when I had seen him last, but not to the point of emaciation, and his year-round tan survived. Only the pellucid blue eyes were different; before, they had been ordinary eyes, perhaps more grey than blue, but now they seemed with every sec-

ond to become clearer and more brilliant. I looked out the window again and wondered what I would do if he asked me for the truth. He had asked one of his sisters if she knew what was wrong with him, and she, not being strong or harsh enough to say, “Yes, you have cancer and you will die,” had merely replied that his doctor had not told her. I had planned before I



came just how I would answer any questions he might put to me, but now I began to realize that even had he not been so clearly looking into another world than the one I knew, I could not have given the glib answers I had thought out so carefully. I had thought that were he to ask me, “Carol, am I going to die?” I would tell him that we all had to die—a safe answer, surely: but somehow the calm generality reversed itself, and instead of seeing this death as one among millions, the common human destiny, I saw all death, the pain and grief and hopelessness of all time, concentrated upon the figure

on the bed. I felt my tears, which would be shed in time for other uncles, for neighbors and friends, for my parents, and at last by others for me, and I wanted to say to my uncle, “You are going to die very soon. You should know that much at least,” but I did not know how to tell him, and I was afraid that he might cry. Outside the window sunlight gleamed on chrome, and a blue-uniformed Negro wheeled a figure with a bandaged head across the lawn toward some trees.

“You’ll have to go now,” said the nurse. “It’s nearly time for him to go to sleep.”

“I know,” I said; and as I carefully slid my hand from his and looked for the last time into those terribly clear blue eyes, I realized that for a long time he had known better than I.

Last Settling Day

J. Close

If the milkmaid calls
I shall be here at end time
and will do with her then

I am walking on
to the hush-quiet places
maybe even far away far
past the black woods
where the Singads play
beyond the green mellow
I to follow to find
fallow-worn feelings
behind passing
and making the long up climb
over frosty hillocks
past bestial hungers
free-forced on
I come to see what was wanted
and what was not in me
knowing
it is now
to go back changing about
instead of that
winding with head down
along the row of cypress trees
reading by heart the stone
and memories of triple-time full years
in half-full life and she
believed to know in me
but passing on to
yes it is late
and I still have to

The Kitchen Maid

Stephan Wonham

Her lip trembled over the general wound
Of passing with a glance,
Or worse, of staring blankly face to face
Without the name to pin a recognition.

She sat bone-hollow with that thought
Before the fire, and later
Searched with her toe in the ash,
But could not discover her name either.

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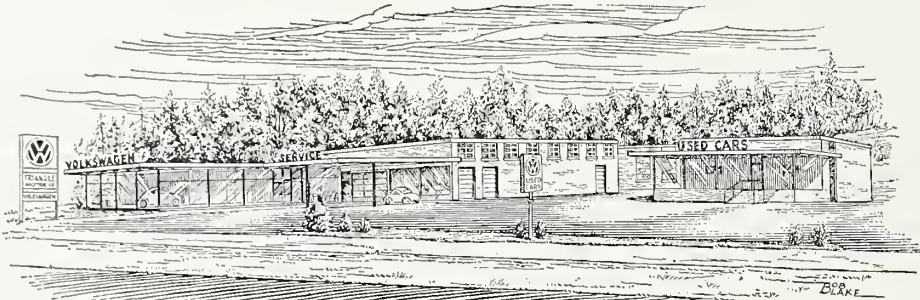
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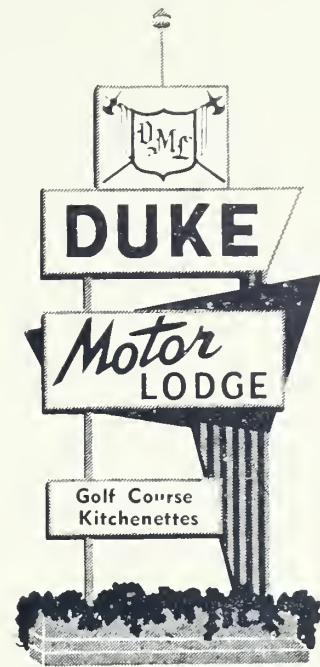
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CONTENTS.

EXPLANATORY.....	Page 3
EDITORIAL NOTES: Prohibition in Trinity.....	4
Examinations and Degrees.....	4
More Room.....	4
The Sugar Planters.....	4-5
Reed & Kellogg.....	5
English Orthography.....	5
EDITORIALS: Endow the Colleges.....	6
A College Library.....	6
The Chicago Anarchists.....	6-7
England's Irish Policy.....	7
Lynch Law.....	7-8
A Temperance Party.....	8
Uncharitableness in Politics.....	8-9
REVIEWS: Genung's Elements of Rhetoric.....	9-10
Joynes-Messner German Grammar.....	10
King Solomon's Mines—Haggard.....	10-11
Labor Movement in America—Ely.....	11-12
Colleges.....	12
EXCHANGES.....	13-14
LOCALS.....	15-16
ALUMNI.....	17-18

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The Archive's Eightieth Anniversary Literary Arts Festival

The annual Literary Arts Festival will be held in celebration of *The Archive's* eightieth anniversary this year. The Festival will last from Saturday, April 15, through Tuesday, April 18. Mr. Joseph Heller and Mr. Stephen Spender will be on the Duke Campus during this period.

Mr. Heller is the author of the best-selling novel, *Catch-22*. He is a native New Yorker, who has studied at New York University, Columbia University, and Oxford, where he was a Fulbright Scholar. His writings include *Catch-22*, and the screenplay for *Sex and the Single Girl*. He is currently working on his second novel.

Mr. Spender is the first British poet to be appointed consultant in poetry in English to the Library of Con-

gress. He is from London and studied at University College, Oxford. His writings include many volumes of poetry, prose, and criticism, among them; *Collected Poems*, *Selected Poems*, *The Burning Cactus*, *The Trial of a Judge*, and *The Making of a Poem*. He is the editor of the British magazine *Encounter*, and he is currently teaching at Wesleyan University, in Connecticut.

Mr. Heller will give a public reading from his novels Sunday, April 17.

Mr. Spender will read from his poetry Monday, the 18th.

Both readings will be held in Baldwin Auditorium, at 8:00 P.M.

Admission is free.

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Nightingales and Wine

Miss Burney leaned forward over her desk like she always did, her thin fingers spread wide and touching the wood, like two five-legged spiders. She was doing Keats today. She spoke to the clock on the back wall, not to the eleven girls sitting in front of her. The classroom was hot; they hadn't turned off the heat even though it was early spring, and the sunny-cool air could be felt now and then coming through the two windows. It was almost too bright to look outside; if you did, your eyes hurt to come back into the darkness of the room. I looked at the pictures on the wall. Miss Burney had given us the test she always gave, about halfway through the year, where we had to tell what was in the pictures just so she could show how we never noticed what was around us. One was the Parthenon, and another was Stonehenge, both photos in a brown-red color. The one I had missed was St. George killing his dragon, a cartoon sort of picture with long curling flames coming out of the dragon's nose.

Lenore Rogers passed me a note. It said, "We just found out, she *has* it." She meant the cancer. We had been all through it at breakfast, "It eats your insides out," said Lenore. Lenore was pretty, too pretty for her own good. It made her think she could say anything and get away with it. "You get all rotten inside," she said. I told her no, you didn't, that was ulcers, and cancer made you get big and bloated.

Miss Burney was about fifty-five we figured, because she said she'd got out of college thirty-four years ago. She was tall, with thin hair that frizzed over her ears, and high cheekbones. What she wore was mostly skirts that hung limp from her low waist and white shirts that came untucked. No one liked her much because she was a hard grader and you had to memorize things, like fifty verses of "The Ancient Mariner," and

you even had to get the punctuation right if she asked you to write part of it.

"How do you know?" I wrote to Lenore. I had to wait until Miss Burney turned to the black board and wrote 1795-1821 before I could pass it. There was just a chance she was making it up. She wrote back that Ellen Schaeffer told her so I knew it was true. Ellen got all A's and was president of the Current Affairs Club. She was ugly, and you could really trust her. She said the housemother had told her. Ellen was friends with the housemother.

"Louise Martin," said Miss Burney, "do you know how old that makes Keats at his death?"

"Well, twenty-six, I guess," I answered, looking at the figures on the board.

"A young man," she said. "Very young." She was back at the clock again, raising her eyes to it over our heads. "Turn to page ninety-four please." We had *Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*. "Louise Martin, the first stanza." I read it slowly, "Ode to a Nightingale," and pronounced "Lethe" wrong. She had Lenore read the second stanza. Lenore was in dramatics and had been Rosalind last year. I hated people in dramatics, and you could tell from the way Lenore read that she was in it. She really went overboard on the lines about the wine and the purple-stained mouth, but Miss Burney liked it.

"Excellent, Lenore," she said. "You have a fine voice. I wish the rest of the class would speak up as you do." She looked at me.

"Once I was in Italy," Miss Burney said. "About thirty-four years ago. We were driving through the countryside near Milan and had a flat tire on the tour bus. As we waited on the roadside for it to be changed, the other girls and I, a peasant, a young man, came

along on his way into town." She hesitated a moment, looking from the clock to us and back again. Everyone was listening; we were always anxious to find out about what she was before she got to be a teacher and old.

"He sang songs for us while we waited," she said. "And he drank a dark red wine. I will always remember," she said, and everyone listened; "I will always remember that moment, under a bright, bright Italian sky, and on the white road, that young man tossing back his head, he had curly black hair, and taking a long drink of the wine. He understood no English, but I quoted these lines to him, and I always think of that moment when I read them."

"Damn," said Laury Carson next to me. "I thought it was going to be something romantic." Miss Burney was deaf in one ear, so you could whisper in class. But she could read lips, and you had to make sure she wasn't watching. Laury had taken to saying damn lately. She had a brother who visited her every week from St. Christopher's and she probably got it from him. I wondered if she knew about what Lenore had found out.

Miss Burney was reading the rest of the poem. I listened to the sound of her voice, but not the words. There was a cloud making a shadow go across the green lawn outside, and I wanted to watch it. Besides, Miss Burney was too dramatic. She raised the book up toward the clock as if the nightingale were perched there on the hour hand. It was embarrassing when she did that, spoke the words loud and high just as if we weren't there at all. It was like she was trying out for a play. She was talking even louder now, and I had to listen to the words. "Away! Away! for I will fly to thee." I tried to imagine her saying that to the curly-headed Italian man, and what she looked like then. Probably she had had more hair, and wasn't so thin; she looked terribly like a man now, maybe she had really looked like a young girl thirty-four years ago.

Now her voice dropped, a low, mournful sound like a chant in church, almost a monotone. It made me tighten up my jaw muscles. I thought you should read poetry in your normal voice, not ham it up as if you were John Keats himself reincarnated. She had done the same thing with Milton; we thought she'd cry over *Lycidas* while she was reading it, but always when she got through with a poem she went back to her regular voice, so you knew it was all pretension.

"I have been half in love with easeful Death," she read, slowly and quietly, so low that everyone was scared to move a muscle. Laury's elbow was pressing my arm, trying to push it off the arm rest of the desk. I thought she must not know or she'd realize she ought

to listen to see what Miss Burney would do about that death verse. So I wrote her a message, writing a little then listening so it would look like I was taking notes.

"Miss Burney has got cancer," I wrote. I folded it up. But then I unfolded it and added, "I feel so sorry for her, don't you." I dropped it in Laury's lap.

Miss Burney was looking straight at me. "Read the last stanza, Louise," she said. I felt my face burning up as I launched into it. She stopped me after the first word, "forlorn."

"Don't you see what it says about the word? Read it the way it obviously has to sound. It says 'like a bell.'"

I began again. "Forlorn, the very word is like a bell."

"FORLORN! the very word is like a bell," said Miss Burney, meaning I was to do it again.

"FORLORN! the very word is like a bell," I said, trying not to hear my own voice, going on as fast as I could until I finally reached the last line. "Fled is that music, do I wake or sleep."

"Is that a question or a statement?" she asked.

"Well, a question," I muttered.

"Please read it like one."

"Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?" I said, and it was over. I waited for her to ask for the scrap of paper. She stood straight, behind the desk. I knew she'd seen me write the note, now still folded in Laury's lap. Miss Burney took a deep breath. "Tomorrow," she said, "you will each hand in an essay entitled 'what makes a poem live.'"

Lenore and Ellen looked at each other. The bell hadn't even rung, and Miss Burney usually kept us late. "That is all," she said, looking at the clock.

We left slowly. Miss Burney had walked to the window and was looking out. I got the note back from Laury outside. "Is that true?" she said, challenging the message. "I don't know," I said.

"Let's go eat our lunch on the lawn," said Lenore. "I've got sugar cakes we can pass around that my mother sent. It's so sunny outside."

"Don't worry about the way she made you read, Louise," said Ellen. "I can't stand the way she does that. You'd think we were going to be on the radio."

"Well I don't care about it, she doesn't bother me," I said. "I still think it's better to be natural with a poem and not put on about it."

"And that damn story about the Italian man," Laury said. "What was the point?"

"You don't have to say damn every third word," said Ellen.

"Come on," I said, "let's go. Somebody else will get our place on the lawn."



M. Poirier

Kites

Hesitant, the paper bird
Like a shot hawk
Dives at the lull
And flutters earthward lame—
Pull tight, my fairlings, run—
Let the bitter gust
Lift up its trinket,
Swoop it asky—
Pinned by the faint fierce drag
Of the wind's catenary,
A tailed spot in heaven
Free but a length of twine.

Fly up, my fledglings,
Catch the courage
Of the life-wind
Blowing you from my reel.
Yet once played out, though the wind
Fail and drop you
Toward the bare spiked trees—
Though my heart's flesh
Be torn with yours,
And the cord's faint image
Stretch from womb to heart—
There is no hauling in—
Soar free or dip and crash—
The string is cut.



A Wayfall Stranger

On an afternoon in late winter when a golden and almost reborn sun kaleidoscoped across grass newly green from melting snows, Preble Chambless walked away from school and never came back. I said good-bye on dusty steps, shaking a moist hand saying really nothing. And I watched as a torn leather suitcase banged softly against his leg as he walked slowly down the flagstone walk. I could not walk to his car with him that time or close his door for him or even wave good-bye. And so I watched him as he turned out of the driveway, sliding slightly on the gravel, his face smiling in a motionless farewell.

A warm and almost gentle wind curled around the building like smoke, rustling a small pile of long dead leaves and then slowly dying like a breath spent. I stood on the steps a long time looking down the road. Our apartment was on a mountain overlooking a valley called Craggy, six miles from Berry. The mountain sloped gently where I stood, but farther down it was steep, and I could see the road as it wound its dusty length around the mountain and into the trees. The road was empty now except for a small dog crossing into the tall grass on the shoulder. I looked up into a blue sky which should have been gray and laughed very softly.

"You're a fool, Preble, just a fool," I said, and walked back through the scratched wooden door into our apartment.

But Preble wasn't a fool at all, he had only been captured by a generation of invisible men who didn't care about living but who made all the rules. When we lived in a dormitory we had divided the world up into poets and mathematicians, the poets being the people who lived life and loved beauty, and the mathematicians those who couldn't see past their own work. But then Preble discovered that almost everyone was a gleep and that even a lot of the poets were caught up

in a gleep world. Preble said all the gleeps had red hair, buck teeth, red beady eyes, and turtle necks and they never came out of their rooms except to go to the bathroom. He was always plotting ways to kill them and he used to get them scared by telling them he was going to put arsenic in their toothpaste. I was ready to get rid of the gleeps too, but we never did, we just talked about it. But everything caught up with Preble because he wasn't happy and he believed that you should be able to find a place where you're happy al-



most all of the time. I couldn't say anything because if I argued with him it would only make him defend what he was doing and then he would surely have to go through with what he had decided. So I let him down and let him go and never said good-bye. And I knew I would have to go tell Tara whom both Preble and I loved, but who was Preble's girl.

The first time I ever saw Tara I was drunk and I asked her if she wanted me to flip her. She said sure so I tried and she threw me into a chair. I would have broken my head if Preble hadn't already been sitting there. She told me she learned judo from a Japanese boy she had dated who just missed making the olympic team because of a broken ankle. I thought she was a bitch at first because she was sarcastic as hell, but I was drunk and deserved it. She was one of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen but for some reason I could never picture her when I wasn't with her and I could never tell anyone what she looked like. I could only remember that her hair smelled fresh and clean and that she didn't wear lipstick. I always wanted to go out with her but Preble dated her first so I never did.

On the way down the mountain to her dorm I tried not to think of anything. I rode the whole way with the top of the car down, feeling a little better in the sharpening wind. The air was very moist and much cooler now and through breaks in the trees I could see gray clouds as they swept across the face of the mountains. The gathering clouds were almost strange in their likeness to a summer storm and I felt glad that warm weather was coming for good. I loved the drive to school from our apartment. The air was always clean and fresh and the trees, sharply etched against a changing sky, were always strong and sheltering. I often stopped on early morning trips to walk along some of the trails that led off into the woods. I loved walking through the birch and balsam trees where the forest floor was covered with thick spongy moss and the only sound was the rush of the wind in the tops of the trees high overhead. I always stopped at a small stream that ran out of a spring in the face of the mountain. There was a birch bark pipe in the spring through which a slender trickle of water ran and I would stop for a drink before going on. The water was clear and achingly cold and I liked to sit and watch it as it flowed smoothly over a small ledge and down the mountain. A little farther on a meadow burst suddenly out of the evergreen woods and I would often sit there for hours in the early morning dew eating blueberries and listening to the forest. No one else ever came there except maybe Preble because I had told him about it, but I never saw even him.

I didn't stop on the way down to Tara's but I wanted

to because I was scared knowing that I couldn't do anything for her. I parked the car in front of her dorm, put the top up and walked through the wide doors into the reception room. She came right down and she looked beautiful in white shorts and blouse. She had let her hair grow since I met her and it was below her shoulders now, soft and heavy. We went into a study room off from the foyer and sat down on the sofa and I didn't know what to say.

I told her about Preble and she knew because he had left her a letter that morning. I tried to tell her something that mattered, but I think she knew more than I did, so it was me who tried to understand. I told her that Preble couldn't accept that things were gray instead of black or white, that everything wasn't one way or the other. I told her about his hatred of the gray people, the ones you could see through, the ones who bounced off the dormitory walls on the way to the bathroom. Preble couldn't stand all the people who couldn't appreciate or enjoy so he had to leave. I said he would be all right if he kept running and didn't stop and I believed it because when you're running you don't have to think, you can read a magazine or talk to a stranger. It's only when you stop for good that everything catches up with you, then you have to cry or come back or if you can, start running again. I said I wanted Preble to stop because I knew he would come back. But I didn't want him ever to come back until he understood that it was the invisible man's world, that they were the ones who made the rules; the rules that looked so good on the surface, but like Christmas tree balls had nothing inside. He had to learn to live with the gray people but I hated even that because when he accepted them he would become gray too.

And Tara told me a lot about Preble. She said he told her that she was gray and that he couldn't understand or reconcile it. And she told me that she didn't love him. When she said that I was very afraid and I began to tell her I had to leave, but I didn't get up. Instead I touched her hair with my hand. Very suddenly she put her arms around me and then we were holding each other as if we were afraid. We sat like that for over an hour talking quietly, her head resting on my shoulder, the smell of her auburn hair surrounding me. Once, I touched her lips lightly with my fingers and she turned her face up toward me and stared into my eyes for several seconds. I never kissed her, and after awhile I got up and she walked me to the door, holding my hand very tightly. I looked at her a long time before I said good-bye, but there was nothing else I could do, so I let go of her hand and walked out the door.

Outside the sky was dark and cloudy and a cool

wind flowed down the street. It had been raining and the pavement in front of the dorm was still black and wet. Across and up the street a police car stopped at the city jail and three men got out. Their voices drifted down to me, in the evening air, a soft lazy mumble of mountain drawl. I listened for a minute before turning and walking up the street to my car. I had left the front

windows down and the dash was damp where the rain had blown in. I got in and took a dirty towel from under the seat and wiped it dry. For a moment I just lay back in the seat and rested.

"I don't really think I understand at all," I said to a girl who was walking by toward the dorm. And then I started the car and went back up the mountain.



William H. Guy

Night-Walker's Song

The lustre of her brazen, burnished thighs.
A man and a woman. Arms enwound
Her circling . . . liquid limbs . . . I saw that fall
That waterfall of curls, that cataract of coil.
Unearth her dark, unearthly underground.
I who have walked at night by China Wall,*
Have seen the petals scattered on night's soil.
The world revolves in rondure of her eyes.

*A lover's lane in Pittsburgh

Buddy of Mine

I lay like a two-tailed, sun-basking lizard on the oriental rug in our living room contemplating ghosts. Father, a doctor, was bustling about efficiently somewhere in the etherous corridors of our town's massive two-story hospital, and mother, equally efficient, and co-chairman of the Subcommittee for Planting Azaleas around the Putting Green at the Country Club, was supervising the placement of a pink-blossomed symbol of leisure some four miles away. So I was all alone. The careless patterns on the rug spread around me like autumn leaves, red and white from the last glancing shafts of sunlight, and my P.F. Flyers lay growing like toad-stools between my two tails. My general science book was open, and my pencil bore down hard and dark sketching ridiculously phantom-like cumulous clouds. The front door swung open and thundered against the wall shattering my reverie. In rushed Jessica Green, my next-door neighbor, spewing like a Saturday rainstorm.

"Do *you* know! Do *you* know!"

Jessica prefaced everything she said this way, especially when she was excited. It didn't annoy me then, but I'm sure it would now since she knew very well that I didn't know. After all, she was in the eighth grade and I was only in the fifth.

Today she was dressed in blue-jeans and one of her brother's old sweat shirts, and although at the time I was nurturing an aversion to girls, there was something I liked about Jessica, even though she was a better football player than me. She was large for her age, not plump, but healthy and robust. Her forehead was hidden by a dark tangled fluff that had been a bang before she had left for school in the morning. She was panting now and out of breath.

"Do you know," she blew, "what an idiot-fink Johnny Turner is?"

"No, what?" I shook my head importantly trying to conceal that I didn't even know what an idiot-fink was.

"He and all his friends—stupid! They think they're so big!" she fumed.

Disapprovingly I grunted a deeply interested, go-ahead "grunt," thinking all the while that they were, after all, pretty big. Johnny Turner even had a pair of combat boots, and one day during recess he had walked through every mud puddle in the school yard.

"Do you know, they chased me all the way home from school this afternoon?"

"Why?" I asked, thoroughly fascinated.

At this her face reddened slightly and she self-consciously pressed a pimple that had raised itself just beneath her lower lip. "To touch me," she whispered, pointing at but scrupulously not touching the blue and white emblem on the front of her sweat shirt.

As astonished as I was, I was still rather uncertain of Johnny Turner's motives. Something in Jessica's face, however, told me not to question further.

"You want to watch T.V.?" I asked.

"No," she said. "Let's go to the Broadville Place. I want to get away from the block, cause I think Johnny Turner is still hiding somewhere near my house."

It was late, and I knew my mother would be coming home soon, but the Broadville Place! There was adventure beyond its cobwebbed steps and mystery behind its delapidated shutters! And then there was nobody in the world that could tell a ghost story like Jessica.

"You ain't afraid, are you?" she asked.

"Uh, Uh," I shook my head bravely.

"You're great," she said. "Any of those finky boys in my class would be scared to go out there this time of day."

I smiled suavely. "Here, I've got some cards and

we can get some clothes pins off the line and hook 'um to the spokes of our bicycles and sound like motor-cycles!"

"Great!" she said.

We were outside in a instant and the cards were beating against the spokes. "Tat-tat-tat-ta-tuh," and the wind was whipping against our faces, and we were at the Broadville Place in no time at all.

The lespedeza whistled softly around the old house that was in the middle of a field about a mile from each of our homes. The sun, instead of deflecting in sharp yellow lines on the moldy walls and floor, hovered like a thin grey veil in the room Jessica and I selected for our seance. We lowered ourselves religiously onto the bare, dusty floor of our phantom den.

"Do you know," Jessica began, "what happened to the last people who were here this time of day?"

"Uh, Uh," I whispered, my voice beginning to quiver.

"Well, there was some robbers that came out here, and, you know, ghosts ain't afraid of anything 'sept enemy ghosts—and they ain't too afraid of them either."

I nodded my head in awe.

"Anyway, there was three of these robbers—jewelry store robbers—and the ringleader was named Jenny—she was a girl. Well now, Jenny was gettin' kind of tired of goin' around and robbin' jewelry stores, especially with these two goons she had helpin' her. So they were meetin' at this hideout and Jenny was going to shoot them and stop robbing jewelry stores." Jessica paused to let this sink in.

I moved restlessly trying to unravel Jenny's logic which I knew must be impeccable since I didn't understand it at all. The boards beneath me creaked and seemed to echo from the hall. Anxiously I crossed my arms squeezing my chest with all my might.

Jessica continued, "Now Jenny was standing right where I am now about to shoot these two finks when she heard a sort of moaning sound out in the hall. Not being afraid of anything, and even a little curious about ghosts, she decided to take a look around."

At this point I thought I really did hear a sound in the hall, and this time it echoed from the boards beneath me that were creaking with my trembling.

Even Jessica seemed to stop a second as if to listen, but she persisted momentarily in that singular unruffled tone that was Jessica telling a ghost story. "Jenny walked over to the door and looked out into the hall and before the other two robbers knew what had happened, she'd vanished. There was about a minute that there wasn't a solitary sound in the house sept for the breathin' of the two robbers. And, do you know, just as they was about to make a break for it, Jenny's gun fell into the middle of the doorway, and there was a terrible sound of chains clankin' and voices moanin', and when the robbers looked into the hall there was . . ."

"Combat boots!" I screamed.

"The ghosts has combat boots!"

Sure enough, I had seen combat boots appear in the corner of the doorway and retreat quickly. And apparently Jessica had too, for she gasped sharply and grabbed my hand pulling me toward the window. We scrambled out the small opening and into the field in one motion. With no concern for the lespedeza that scratched and welted our arms and legs, we raced toward our bicycles which were parked in front of the house.

The flight home was one of fear and tacit contemplation. Jessica had never been so quiet, and when we reached her house, all she said was "Bye." That night I could hardly sleep. Every time I turned the mattress springs seemed to creak like boards, and the wind outside rushed against my window like lespedeza whistling in the breeze. Even the next day when my teacher

asked me what might have happened to the Lost Colony, I unintentionally blurted "Ghosts." Everyone started laughing, and that upset me more than ever.

I left school alone, a self-imposed exile from the spiritual ignorance of my classmates. As I turned the corner beside Field's Drug Store, however, I stopped. Sitting in the back booth, hands clasped, were Jessica and Johnny Turner.



Mike Wolfe

Satan Is A Gentleman

Satan walked into Eden,
Cheap red tie and diamond stickpin,
Wings tucked under his coat
And tail coiled into a pocket,
Quick nervous walk in shined black shoes.
His claws, when he lights a Marlboro
With a Japanese Zippo
Are clipped and manicured,
And his horns are concealed by pomaded black hair.
“A nothing scene,” he mutters;
All his teeth are capped.
He snaps away his cigarette
And stamps out the volcano it produces on the grass.
“Now where’s this chick
I’m supposed to meet?”
He curls his lip at the sunshine
And twists his mustache at the Garden.
“What the Hell
Do you do around here at night?”
On a park bench he spies a big blonde.
“Must be the one. Looks all right.”
He walks toward her, moving cool and easy,
Lighting another Marlboro.
“Hello, girlic. Like to know something good?”
He says—and bows.



Louise Bibb

Remembering Aunt Lucy

"Now, you're going to remember what to do, aren't you?" Daddy reminded me as we came to the end of the driveway and pulled to a stop under the pine trees beside the other cars. "Aunt Lucy was your grandmother's sister, and your Aunt Ida was mighty fond of her, too, so you're going to have to be real quiet and not jump around a lot." He turned the motor off and hooked the key ring onto the edge of his pocket. "We want to make your Grandma feel a little bit happier, don't we?"

He glanced at me sideways. I was sitting on the seat beside him staring solemnly at the glove compartment knob. He had talked to me constantly during the whole twenty minute ride from Charlottesville, but I had been a lot quieter than usual and had hardly said a word during the last five or ten minutes.

I didn't feel the way I had last night. Then the prospect of going to the funeral had appealed to me tremendously. I had felt terribly grown up, a mature and proper lady like Mama or Aunt Sue or Aunt Ida, and also competent and reliable—people were depending on me to behave well and to keep the others cheered up. I had bounced around the house all evening helping Mama find my hat and trying on my gloves. But this morning the excitement had worn off, and the feeling of importance had become one of burdensome responsibility. I didn't know how you had to be when someone had died. Nobody I knew well had died since I could remember.

Daddy could see that as the time drew nearer the idea of going to a funeral was beginning to make me uneasy. He patted my lap reassuringly, and there was a look of concern in his gray eyes. He had told Aunt Ida last night that seven seemed a little young to be going to a funeral, but she had seemed so hurt that I wasn't coming that Grandma had begun to get upset, and Daddy had given in. It might be a good thing for me to go, at that, since I hadn't known Aunt Lucy very well. Daddy disliked funerals, and perhaps if my first experience with them were not accompanied by sadness, later and more painful funerals would be easier for me to bear.

He sat pretending not to look at me and drumming under the dashboard nervously with the backs of his fingers. "Somebody's looking mighty grim," he said gruffly. He cleared his throat and glanced around for something to take my mind off the funeral. Suddenly he sprang forward on the seat and pointed with excitement through the windshield to a patch of sky between the pine tree and the tool shed. "There he goes! Right there, look! That was a bob-white! Right there—look!" I craned my neck in time to see a blotch of grayish brown streak behind the shed. "Did you see him?"

"Uh-huh, I think so." Daddy seemed so excited that I squinted through the windshield, hunting him in the grove of peach trees beyond the shed.

"Yes, sir, that was Mr. Robert White—now there's my girl—I bet he's got a nest back in the orchard.

The birds'll eat those peaches!" He opened the door with one hand and shoved his hat on with the other. "Can you whistle to him?" I made bob-white calls as I climbed out of the car.

Aunt Ida had been sitting silently with Grandma under the oak tree near the house, and now she glided toward us, making no noise at all and as little movement with each step as her small, plump form would permit. I liked to talk to her sometimes, because I was almost as tall as she was and it made me feel grown up, like sitting in the chair by the front door at home where my feet would reach the floor even when I leaned back. She would tell me who all the china in the living room had belonged to and who the grim looking people were in the family portraits along the wall. She thought a lot of them, and was especially proud of one man who had known Thomas Jefferson and had been to a ball at Monticello once. He was dignified and proper, but he looked so sad that I thought he must have made the party right dreary.

She didn't look like talking today. Her eyebrows were arched very high above her dull, grey eyes, and her thin, pale mouth was in a straight line and quivered slightly at the edges. With her pale skin and her dress the same shade of gray as her hair, she looked rather like a black and white picture.

Daddy called, "Hello, Sis, how you doing?" His voice started getting lower at once, and the bounce left his movement, as though Aunt Ida were radiating a thick, gray cloud the color of her dress which clogged the people around her into slow motion. "Got a right pretty day to bury her."

"Yes, we'll be putting her away in not quite two hours now." Aunt Ida glanced at me and gave me a wan smile that meant hello. I smiled back uncomfortably. "Why, where's Elinor?" she asked, noticing that Mama wasn't there.

"She had that wedding she was supposed to go to." Daddy sounded apologetic. "She's not going to stay for the reception. Dan and his folk are bringing her to the church in time so we can all go in together."

"Oh, yes, that's right," Aunt Ida replied briefly.

The screened door banged and Uncle Joe's broad frame loped toward us, stiff-legged like an athlete with arthritis. "Well, what you doin' here, monkey?" he growled at me. "Sue, there's a monkey out in this yard. What must I do with it?"

"Don't tease the child, Joe," Aunt Sue's voice called.

He grinned at me, and his nose, bulbous and leathery like a sweet potato, scrunched up in huge wrinkles. There were coarse hairs growing out of it, and the hair on his head was almost white and equally coarse and unmanageable. He pushed it back with one thick, stubby hand. I wrinkled my nose back. I had been scared to death of him when I was four or five, and liking him was still a novelty. I didn't even mind the monkey bit now except when he ran it into the ground. "You a monkey, aren't you?" he asked me.

"No," I answered, wincing mechanically.

"Look like a monkey to me." He patted my head roughly, just as if there wasn't a hat on it. Then he dropped his hand heavily on Daddy's shoulder. "Hello, there, old boy."

"Joe," Daddy nodded back. "How's Mother taking it this morning?"

"Pretty good, I think. About the same as last night. She still don't seem to remember it all the time. Sometimes she does, but then she

forgets like she was doing last night when Ida had to keep reminding her."

"I declare, last night it just looked like it hurt her all over again every time she was told," Daddy replied, rubbing the back of his neck. "I wonder if it wouldn't be better to let her forget it sometimes when she can." He looked over at Grandma. She was staring blankly into space, since she couldn't see or hear at a distance very well any more. "Annie, why don't you run over and speak to your Grandma."

I trudged through the tall grass, tugging my hat back into position. Grandma had on a black crepe dress and was fingering the top button with one hand. I came to a stop directly in front of her. "Hello, Grandma," I called. I leaned over and kissed her on the cheek, trying to be cheerful and not too jerky. My hat brim bumped her forehead.



"Well, it's good to see my granddaughter. How are you, Ann?" She held my arm with one hand and patted it weakly with the other.

"Fine, thank you," I said mechanically. I was doing O. K. so far, I thought, but Daddy had said not to mention Aunt Lucy. I had to be careful what I said.

"We're going to miss Lucy a lot, aren't we?" she continued.

Now what could I do—she had brought up the subject! "Yes, ma'am." That seemed to be a safe response, because anything else would mean I wouldn't miss her, and that would be awful. My parents hadn't asked me if I missed her, though, and I hadn't thought about it before.

Grandma gave my arm an extra sympathetic pat. I wasn't sure I would miss Aunt Lucy. I had hardly known her. She had been pretty sick for the last year or two, and I hadn't paid too much attention to her before that. I liked her, I guessed, but I could get along without her. I stared into the black crepe of Grandma's lap, quietly wondering if I deserved the pat.

I was relieved when she dropped my arm to take Daddy's. I didn't feel that I'd done much to comfort her yet. The net ribbon that tied my hat on was scratchy, and I tugged at it. My other had was more comfortable—it had a velveteen cord tie—but it was yellow, and Mama had said that blue was usually thought to be a better color to wear to funerals than yellow.

Aunt Sue came out onto the back stoop and carefully maneuvered her large, lumpy form to the ground by lowering one hip, since her knees didn't bend any better than Uncle Joe's. Her eyes were small and dark, almost fierce, but the wrinkles at the edges showed that she laughed a lot. She looked at me after she had successfully gotten off the stoop, and her broad mouth stretched into a sudden, explosive smile that made me feel better again. "I declare, who's that pretty girl over there?" She couldn't seem to keep it straight who I was, either.

I walked over to the door, brushed off a spot of back stoop, and sat down, hugging my knees. The mountains looked very blue, and much nearer than they did from home. The sun looked like it was almost noon. We'd be leaving soon.

A lean, gray cat came out from his hole under the

house, sat down and began to chew violently at a spot on his side. They had right many cats out here. Aunt Lucy had told me once that there were probably eight or ten, she didn't even know how many. You couldn't play with them because the mother hid them under the tool shed or off somewhere near the orchard, so that they never saw any people until they were half grown, and then they were too scary to let you get near them. I rocked my knees with my arms and tried to remember when that had been—two summers ago, maybe, when I was five. It was my only clear memory of Aunt Lucy before her mind got bad and she'd just squeeze my hand and ask who I was and have to be told over and over again that I was Ann, Andy's child.

She didn't squeeze my hand so much that day, I remembered. She had lived here with Uncle Joe and Aunt Sue. That afternoon she was sitting in the back yard snapping snaps. One of the cats had come out from under the house, and I had asked her if I could go play with it. "You're welcome to if you can catch it, Ann," she had said. "When we had young folks around, the cats could come up and just rub up against you, but now they're too scary. They need a little girl to pet them when they're little so they won't get wild."

I had liked Aunt Lucy. The cat had run back under the house and we never did catch it, but she had spent a little while trying to help me coax it out. I had given

up trying to catch the cats a year ago, but all of a sudden I wanted to pet this one for Aunt Lucy. "Kitty," I called softly, reaching my hand toward him. No response. I got up very slowly and crept to the wall of the house so that if he ran he wouldn't go under it and edged along toward him. He jerked his head up and watched me with a steady, suspicious glare. I stopped for a minute. Then I stooped and continued toward him, reaching out and wiggling my fingers. "Here, Kitty." I was three or four feet from him when he bounded into the yard where Daddy and Uncle Joe were talking away, oblivious of everything else as they always were when they got together.

I trotted after him, calling. As I pounced he dived into the forsythia bush behind Aunt Sue. "Kitty, Kitty!" I called indignantly. I squatted down under the bush and reached for him, rattling the branches. He



wriggled madly out and tore under Grandma's chair. I bolted after him crying, "Kitty, here Kitty. Kitty-kitty-kitty-kitty!" I crouched on the ground behind the chair and reached under.

"My, what's this?" said Grandma, sensing movement nearby.

"Ann," cried Aunt Ida. "Come over here, Ann. Goodness, don't run around so." Her voice wasn't loud or cross or threatening, but the enunciation was too precise and the consonants too clear. Her tone was one of deep disapproval in a person too refined to shout or even sound cross. I felt the tight, gripping feeling in my chest that I always got when I was called down by someone who wasn't my mother or father. I hurried toward her, trying to look poised so that others wouldn't notice anything. I felt my face grow hot.

"You'll upset your Grandmother, and look, you're getting all mussed up." I was humiliated. I had planned to be so quiet. It looked like I just couldn't be quiet. Her gray eyes surveyed me quickly, and her thin, pale lips gave a flickery smile. She brushed my dress off where it didn't look dirty to me with mild but businesslike strokes, and her cool, dry fingers picked a yellow forsythia flower out of the net of my hat. "You mustn't get under that dirty old chair."

My eyes grew glassy, and I unfocused them and stared into nothing. "You must be a refined young lady today. Think of your Aunt Lucy, now." She patted me vaguely wherever it was she had dusted me off. My neck was hot too, now, and my neck and throat felt tense. I pushed my chin hard against the net tie of my hat. I could feel the blood throbbing in my face.

Daddy and Uncle Joe had stopped talking, and Aunt Sue called, "Come sit over here by me, Ann." Her voice was kind, but they had all heard. I walked toward the white blur of an empty chair, tensing my steps so I wouldn't trip. I knew if I focused my eyes, the blind mask of poised calmness behind which my humiliation and incompetence were hiding would dissolve.

"Oh, there's a cat. Lucy used to be so fond of them." At least Grandma hadn't seen. I wished Mama was there. She would have stopped me from being disrespectful before Aunt Ida said anything. I guessed I must not feel right about Aunt Lucy, or acting quiet would have come naturally. But the others had an advantage over me—they had known her so much better.

"Goodness, it's getting late. Ann's fidgety because she's hungry," said Aunt Sue kindly. "I'll go get her something. Growing girl needs food." She started toward the house. I wished she would drop the whole matter. She returned with a bunch of white grapes on

a plate. I murmured "thank you" and pretended to listen to the conversation like a refined young lady would.

Daddy and Uncle Joe seemed to have forgotten all about the cat. "Birds been giving you much trouble in the peaches this year?"

"No, some, not much. I can think of years it's been worse. The devil of it is, though, they don't ever eat the ones on the ground—they just peck a little at one on the tree and then go on to another one. If you could just teach them to finish one peach before they started on the next one."

Daddy chuckled. "Blamed things won't do that, though," he said. They were silent for a second. The breeze was cool on my face, and I felt better.

"I remember one year, though, when it wasn't the birds got in the peaches." Uncle Joe said wisely.

"No, sir." Daddy laughed. "That was a big ole bird, there," he added, and laughed again. "That old Deaton boy from up beyond Earlys ville was who it was. Never did figure out why he was getting ours instead of some up his way, though. I expect he could have found better ones—the ground up nearer the mountain is better for peaches, as a rule."

"You sure can't say Aunt Lucy didn't come through on that one," Uncle Joe said fondly. He grinned and rubbed his head. "Now can you?" he continued as if expecting an answer.

"No, sir!" Daddy agreed enthusiastically.

"We'd been hearing somebody up there for two or three nights," Uncle Joe continued, as if Daddy didn't know the story.

"And I suspected it was that ole boy. I'd seen him up there early one evening just pilin' them into a bag as fast as he could. I hollared at him, and he lit out of there, boy!" Daddy whipped one hand against the other to show how fast, and they both laughed.

"Ned Deaton! I didn't know that was who it was!" Aunt Sue exclaimed. "Papa caught him taking some parts off the plow over at our place one night and ran him out!"

"He did!" Daddy cried. "If that ole boy didn't get around!"



Uncle Joe resumed his tale, delighted with the larger audience. "Well, this evening we heard him out there again. Andy said he bet that was who it was. Well, Aunt Lucy said she wasn't just going to sit there, she was going to do something." His blue eyes glowed with fond admiration.

"Yes, sir," Daddy interrupted, "She wasn't one to be scared." He smiled at the forsythia bush. "She was quite a fine old lady."

Uncle Joe didn't mind the interruption. "Well, she went into the kitchen and got Dad's ole squirrel gun and told us boys to get set to see some fast runnin'!"

"Why, that sounds just like Miss Lucy! I can almost hear her saying it!" laughed Aunt Sue.

"And she went out onto the stoop, and she shouted, 'Sherrif, that man's out there stealing our peaches again!'" He raised his voice to drown out Daddy and Aunt Sue's laughter. "And she shot in the air three times!" He stopped for a minute to laugh himself and then shouted, "And that ole rascal ra-an, boy, he took off! You never seen anybody run so fast in all your life! He like to broke his neck gettin' outa there! We found a whole pile of peaches he dropped the next mornin'!"

Uncle Joe's huge frame shook with laughter. Daddy slapped both his knees with his hands and gasped, "I can hear her now, I can just hear her. 'Sherrif, that man's stealin' our peaches again!'" The story always got funnier when you repeated the end again. All three of them shook with convulsive laughter, and I laughed, too.

"Joe! Andy! Joe!" Aunt Ida was standing in front of them. She was almost quivering, and I thought her face looked a little gray now to match the rest of her. The laughter fizzled out like a balloon going down. "You'll get Mother upset!" Her voice was a little shrill and her lips tense. She continued, and the words came out disjointed and emphatic. "I don't want to hear any more laughter here today."

There was silence for a second. "I'm sorry, Sis," Daddy said quietly. His expression was solemn, but his face was still red. It made me uncomfortable to see Daddy looking like a bad little boy who had been fussed at.

"Why, Aunt Lucy used to

laugh at that, herself." Uncle Joe sounded hurt. He gave a rasping, self-conscious cough.

Daddy ran his right hand along his left arm, rubbed his neck, and frowned down at the grass. It was so still, now. My father had been balled out by my standards, and I had been guilty, too. Daddy and I were both too noisy to console people. We just weren't good mourners, either of us.

The tense feeling in my neck and stomach must not have left completely, because it came back. I ate a grape to conceal my uneasiness. It felt like a cool, smooth little bulb in my mouth, and I pushed it around with my tongue and then punctured it. The first little burst of acid puckered my mouth, and the saliva rushed in. It made me think of recess last year in school. It came at 10:45, and everyone had a snack, and mine was always white grapes. I had never had anything to eat since breakfast at about 7:30, so that first bite was always unbearably acid. Mama packed them every day in a little paper bag, and by the time recess came the folded down part of the bag would be so balled up and damp from being held that it would look like it had been chewed. I would go out and sit on one of the benches, and the bench would be covered with dust because there wasn't any grass anywhere in the playground. And I would sit all alone and eat my grapes and think about Mama having packed them, and she would seem far away, like she did now. I felt a hard knot in my throat, and mechanically I ate another grape. My stomach rumbled thankfully.

The others had calmed down again, now, and Aunt Ida was talking. "Sue and Joe and I went down to see her this morning. You all have been down, haven't you?"

"Yes, Elinor and I went down last night." Daddy's voice was low.

"She looked mighty sweet and peaceful, didn't you think?" Daddy answered with a brief nod. He didn't seem to care much for the subject.

I leaned my head back. I was tired. It seemed as though I had been up for a long time. I remembered I used to like white grapes.

Aunt Ida continued, "She's got on that pin she used to wear that was Grandmother Early's. They had it on the collar though, instead of right at the throat like she always wore it. I told them they'd have to change it."

I ate another grape. It tasted smooth and fruity and unbearably wholesome. The cool, sweet, watery nothingness of white grapes always made me hungrier. It sort of waked up my stomach but didn't feed it. It was always a long time between recess and lunch. The lump in my throat rose and grew harder.



"They had her hair fixed real nice, I thought," Aunt Ida continued. "Curled a little at the forehead like she used to wear it."

"Yes, Miss Lucy always did fix her hair real nice," Aunt Sue commented.

I realized with a shock that it was Aunt Lucy they were talking about. They had seen her dead, and so had Mama and Daddy. I didn't know you looked at dead people. My throat felt hard and stiff. I rammed four or five grapes into my mouth to swallow down the lump and burst them all at once. I swallowed some the wrong way and coughed. My eyes blurred, but not from the coughing—it was real tears. My stomach and chest all the way to my throat vibrated violently as I tried to control them, but it was no use. I coughed once more, and the sound refused to stop—I was crying freely.

Suddenly my face was in Daddy's stomach, and he was rubbing my back hard as he pressed me against him. "Sugar, come on, now, stop that." His voice was soothing but filled with distress. "Come on, there, that's no way to behave."

"Now, Ann, dear, don't cry." Aunt Ida rubbed my shoulder. "I know you miss your Aunt Lucy. We all do."

The spasm of tears was over now—all that was left of it were a few little sobs that had gotten lost from the rest, like the tiny tremors that follow an earthquake. It was time to go, and we started toward the cars. Aunt Ida had given me her black linen and lace handkerchief, and I wiped my eyes with it and felt much better. Crying at a funeral seemed so grown up, like crying at a wedding.

Daddy held my shoulder with one hand and rubbed the back of his neck with the other. "You'd better give your Aunt Ida her handkerchief back so you don't forget," he told me.

"Oh, let her keep it. The child is still upset," Aunt Ida answered. She gave me a consoling smile, and I smiled back mournfully. I had that comfortable feeling that you get after you cry. It felt good to know that I was behaving as I should—why, I was doing better at consoling people than Daddy. And I was glad to know that I felt right about Aunt Lucy.

M. Poirier

To Darwin

Somewhere behind me on that long fifth day
That reeled from glycine to gorilla
A myriad myriad turnings round the sun ago,
In fresh seas moon-wracked and cyclone rent
Sloshing and rocking in new-laid basins,
It slowly swelled, crusted itself,
Split, died and dropped its shell
On what slow-silted early river mouth.

So I, a trilobite, washed on this bounded flat
Pitted with tedium and dread of death,
Precipitate crystal by crystal in stone
Of flesh on what race-moulded delta
Somewhere a myriad myriad
Turnings round the outer galaxy,
Before that Sabbath eve when nebulae
In jubilee play games with Newton.

William H. Guy

Overture

Surely amid the wind-blown waifs one greets
At close of day, the counter-clerks in murky streets,
The hobbled housewife scampering toward her fire,
One face will dim love's renegade: desire.

Boss Man

Wifred "Shotgun" Jenkins was reclining on the steps of the courthouse with part of the crew, slowly finishing his cigar as five o'clock approached. He had his own method: first he would light one, usually just after lunch, and smoke about half of it; then he would despair of keeping it lit, and calmly work it over for the rest of the afternoon. This afternoon, as always, the remains of his pleasure were clamped in his mouth looking ridiculously like some kind of growth on his big, red, constantly sweating face. He eyed the scene before him leisurely. The tall magnolia trees and green grass made the little park beside the courthouse seem cool, even though the June sun was still high. The glistening hot automobiles that ran around the square at five o'clock had not yet arrived with their heat. In the middle of the park four young boys were playing a game of runaround with an old football. One of the boys was Lester Wallace's son, who sometimes came from downtown to meet his father and go home with him.

Shotgun removed the cigar with tenderness and spoke: "That boy's pretty fast with that thing." I knew he was not addressing me. Shot, even though he was my superior in the eyes of the State Highway Department, came from a world which I did not understand and did not want to. At least that is what I told myself then, and that is why we did not speak to each other.

Lester answered him: "Yeah, he runs around like a hoppy-toad sometimes. I can't hardly ever catch

him myself." Suddenly the boy carrying the ball was thrown down, hard, and Lester snorted. "That damn nigger got him."

"Can't let him do that," Shot remarked. "Hey, Bobby Joe, come here!" Lester's son looked around to see who was calling him, then slowly trotted over and stood before Shot, panting: "Huh?" Lester glared half-menacingly at his son. "I mean, yes, sir?"

"How come you let that nigger git you like that, son?" Shot asked him.

Bobby Joe did not at first seem to understand. He stared at Shotgun blankly. Finally, "I couldn't help it. They was all chasin' me."

"Well, next time when they catch you, you throw that ball so that nigger boy gits it. Then you git him, hard, understand?"

"Get 'em all, son," Lester said uneasily. The boy just looked at them vacantly for a few seconds. Then a smile of comprehension dawned on his face and turned into a white grin for Shot. "Yes, sir!" he exclaimed, and ran off to rejoin the game.

After that neither Lester nor I spoke until five o'clock arrived. Shot spoke softly to himself occasionally, as when Bobby Joe would tackle the Negro boy. It was usually something like "Ah, git him!" or "Kill his ass!" Once in a while I would look over at him, just out of curiosity, to try and see what he was thinking, but his face was as impassive as ever. He just sat there, eyes open, mouth shut watching. And I sat there twirling a Coke bottle in my hands, thinking about

Shot and what kind of a person he was and what kind of boy Bobby Joe had been and what kind of boy he had become while talking to Shot.

Then five o'clock came and we all went home.

I made it my business not to speak to Shot any more than I had to for several weeks, until that time on road 229. We had got there just after lunch; by then the pipe-laying crew had put it about halfway across the road. It was big pipe, 36-inch, concrete and heavy. Two Negroes handled the winch, lowering the sections of pipe slowly into the ditch scarred out of the red clay. Another Negro guided each unwieldy section into place. It looked like hot, heavy work and I breathed thanks that I could ride around in a big fine state-owned truck all day long.

Shot and I parked the truck near the ditch on the side opposite the winch. We strode up to its bank, where Shot hunkered down his short squat body in the dust and hailed the Negro guiding the sections into place.

"How 'bout it, Lightnin'?"

"Good evenin', suh."

"How that pipe coming along here?"

"Just fine, suh, 'cept fo' that wainch. Hit ain't in too good of shape."

Without making it seem to be a conscious motion, Shot looked up at the winch and casually inspected it. "That's a mighty old winch, Lightning. You ever used it for 36-inch before?"

"Naw, suh. It a hole up, though, I think." He turned to guide the next section of pipe in place. Shot, the day's business concluded, began to relax. He peeled off his shirt, exposing his freckled beer belly and the polka-dot top of his underwear to the open air. After removing a cigar from behind his big ear, he struck a match along the top of his boot. His eyes squinted in intense concentration as he got the cigar lit, but it did not add one wrinkle to his forehead, calm and serene underneath his crewcut. A few slow puffs followed, hanging in the hot paralyzed air, then the inevitable question:

"Lightnin', you been gittin' any lately?"

Lightning turned to him and smiled broadly. "Naw, suh, you know not. I is a married man now."

"Aw, hell, Lightnin', I never heard of that stoppin' anybody before." He chuckled slowly. "You, you're prob'ly figuring right now on tom-cattin' around to-night. Come on now, admit it."

Lightning gave in. "You prob'ly right, suh," he said resignedly, but still grinning. Shot gave me a slow wink.

The sound of a car down the road made both of us on the bank turn around. A big, black Ford with state

government plates was coming straight toward us, trailing clouds of dust. "God damn it," Shot exploded suddenly, "every damn time Joe Martin tells me to do a job, he's got to come look at it hisself. Why don't he just fire me and save the state some money?" He got up to see what Mr. Martin, the county engineer, wanted to see about. Mr. Martin got out of the car, slipping on his sunglasses as he did so. I watched them talking to each other: Shot, small, round, and blue-jeaned, his semi-nakedness glistening in the sun; Mr. Martin, half a head taller than Shot, with a real tie around the neck of a ten-dollar white shirt, even now beginning to wilt when not exposed to the car's air-conditioner.

"How long you been working for the State Highway? Ain't never seen you before."

"Huh?" I realized Lightning had spoken to me. "Oh, about six weeks. This is the first time we've been on this road since I've been here . . . Have you worked here long?"

"Been here ever since I was sixteen year old, 'ceptin' for two years in the Army. Seventeen year, and layin' pipe most of that. How 'bout you? You permanent? You like it?"

"No. I have to go back to school this fall . . . I'll be glad to get outta here, too."

"Uh-huh." That ended the conversation for the time being, so I pretended to be absorbed in his work to cover the embarrassed silence. Suddenly he laughed at some inner thought. "That Mister Shot, he some-thin', ain't he?"

"Yeah," I said flatly and Lightning looked at me, in what seemed like disappointment and may have even been disgust.

Just then Shot and Mr. Martin stopped at the edge of the ditch where I was sitting. The engineer and I exchanged polite nods as he continued talking to Shot about the pipe. "I better check to see that's straight," he said as he gingerly felt his way into the ditch.

Shot snorted softly. "Lightnin' ain't never laid a crooked pipe in his life," he muttered to me. I didn't answer—I was watching Mr. Martin make a fool of himself by trying to "help" Lightning guide the pipe as it was being lowered into the ditch from the other side.

"Suh, don't rock that pipe like that—that wainch'll" Lightning's words were cut off by the groan of metal and the screech of hemp as the winch supports began to buckle, letting the rope unwind. As in a dream, I saw the pipe begin to slide downhill faster and faster, straight for Lightning and Mr. Martin. I saw Shot too, moving faster than I had ever seen him, crouch down and reach a hand in to pull out Lightning as he scrambled to safety. I was simply paralyzed; I could

not react in time and as a result, Mr. Martin was trapped by the falling pipe. With a terrible, piercing scream, he saw the concrete cylinder roll up his leg, flattening him to the ground, and collapsed as it stopped just above his knees. There was no sound for a fraction of a second; then Shot began barking to the Negroes on the opposite bank to throw him the free end of the rope holding the pipe.

"Lightnin', take this rope and tie it onto the bumper of our truck! That pipe's too heavy to pull out. Give her just enough clutch so she won't stall and pull back when I holler! I'll try to work it loose." There was no need for Lightning to answer; he was already running to tie the rope.

"What can I do, Shot?" I asked weakly.

"Nothin', son—just stay out of the way!" So I did, just backed off in the dirt, feeling very helpless. I felt even more so when I saw Shot and Lightning working together. It seemed so precise, so delicate and fragile. Now! and, wheels and engine delicately balanced by Lightning's foot on the clutch, the big yellow Dodge pulled back on the rope; then Shot, his freckled back glistening in the sun, lifted and pushed the massive concrete away from the body of Mr. Martin, now regaining consciousness and groaning horribly. Now!—lift—push—now!—lift—push was all that mattered. Shot and Lightning were communicating silently, completely with each other along the thin yellow cord. And then, finally, inch by inch, the pipe moved and Mr. Martin was pulled free.

The emergency room was all made up of shiny instruments and white furniture and sterile light. In it the figure of Mr. Martin on the stretcher looked incongruous with its blood and dirt and pain. My head was burning as if with a sunburn and I felt a faint chill. Again I felt that same helpless feeling as the bored young doctor asked me questions about the unconscious form before us, none of which I could answer. I felt relieved when Shot arrived from the white canteen with Cokes for himself and for Lightning.

Mr. Martin began to regain consciousness a moment before Shot came back, when the doctor injected him with something. His twisted legs were like lumps under the blanket. "They told me what you did, Shot," he said thickly as Shot came in the room. "That was . . . good. Thank y-you."

"Aw, hell, Mr. Martin," grinned Shot, putting his arm around Lightning. "I couldn't of done it without Lightning here. He's the one you ought to thank. Best driver I ever saw."

"Naw, naw, it was you, Mister Shot. You pushed that dam' pipe jus' right, I jus' kindly *pulled* on it some." He was grinning, too.

Even the doctor didn't need me anymore. I left the room to go get a Coke, because Shot had forgot mine when he got his and Lightning's. I walked down the long empty corridor slowly, hearing the sound of Shot and Lightning Laughing together, and I despaired because I was sure there were some things and some people I would never, ever, understand, even though I wanted to.





Art McTighe

vii

through water walks the onion-skinned
nymphet,
that fervor has made her liaison
strangled trips to an altar
and offering of secrets
to her unknown—
and she lifts up her gnashing
canine fangs
(they have tasted blood in
rainforests—petaled by
her barefoot pressing
on fur
to stain it crimson)

John Close

Medicine Ball

No powderpuff this one
you wanted magic
you (thud) gut it baby

Don't squirm (it happened
to be beauty)
don't writhe—for you
have known the ecstatic demarkation
which fullstops one mid-time

love yourself
as you would have others love you
awake
not with daybreaking
but with daylust.

Drew S. Spears

Shaping Mounds on the Wall

It was Jake who was just finishing.

[. . . That's right, any Saturday night you name, if you go up to the city and then spend the night down by the lake under the pine trees—happens every time. These damn girls come by in their car—drunk on their ass—and get out and start talking to you—yeah, talk for about five minutes maybe and then I'll be damned if they don't climb right in your sleeping bag and start fooling around in your pants before you say a damned word. And I'll tell you the truth: they're not all that good looking but they're so *horny*, baby, they're like *rabbits*.

Good Screw was what he was saying—*Good Screw*—and then Brain was thinking again, sitting against the wall of the cabin outside the circle of seven who were around the late glow of a Sunday night fire—all of them summer workers for the Park Service, including Brian who was seventeen, the youngest—thinking about the lake and a girl while the others were joking and pushing, drinking beer—so that when Jim started a new story, Brian was already fading into his own, on his way to the lake a hundred miles away, hitchhiking.

I don't believe I ever did tell you guys, Jim said, about that bear we had so much trouble with over in Yellowstone last summer. You know there are lots of them over there—about a thousand Browns I think and a hundred or so grizzlies—and pretty often the Browns come into the camp to eat the garbage or whatever else

they can scrape up. Once they find out about the camp they stick around for days, too, and scare the pants off the tourists, of course, so you have to trap them and take them into the back country where they won't bother anyone. Well anyway I remember one night last summer when we came back, the door to the cabin was wide open, and a few of the beds were messed up and trunks tore open. Guys who were smart didn't leave sweets in their cabin because the damned bears can smell it ten miles off, but a few of us hadn't gotten wise. "Damned bears" everybody thought when they saw the damage, and we were all pretty mad, so we sat down and thought about what the hell we were going to do to this bear when he came back, which we knew he'd do. And then a little later in the evening—this was amazing—one of the guys was going to go over to get something to eat, and when he stepped out the door there was this huge Brown ambling by the door, not noticing much of anything, and this guy said, "Oh hi, bear" and slipped back inside the door, a little nervous—Browns won't attack you unless they're provoked, but, you know, who's to say what a Brown thinks is provoking him? So after that everybody called the Brown "Hibare" and we spent a lot of time that night thinking about how we were going to fix his ass . . .]

Half listening and then less and less, Brian let his head slip down the pine boards of the wall of the cabin, finally resting on the floor, staring at the roof and the cold shadows the fire made there; in his mind,

he was travelling: standing at the side of the road next to the camp with his sleeping bag over his shoulder, looking a half mile down into the valley at the town—well, some called it a town—three bars and a whorehouse he had never visited was all it was—and then watching down the road for a car. They had it figured at the camp that a car came by about every ten minutes and that on the average one of three would pick you up. Pretty lonely out here—he remembered talking to a worker who lived close by who claimed he'd never seen traffic—oh he'd seen pictures of it in magazines, though. Brian chuckled, came back for a moment.

[We didn't see Hibare at all the next day, but we were pretty sure he was still around so the next night we put some garbage outside the door and sure enough, the next morning it was gone. Nobody but bears like garbage—I don't like garbage.]

A car was coming now, and a pickup truck behind it (that was traffic, sort of), and Brian flipped out his thumb and put on a big smile—be the friendly hitchhiker. The car was driven by a woman who smiled back, waved, and drove on—Brian remembered sitting through three hours of smiles last summer in New Mexico before getting a ride—and then the pickup truck pulled off the side of the road in front of him. A young guy was driving, and beside him an oh so fine looking girl, short auburn hair parted in the middle and fresh like spring water. Brian leaned in the cab window, told the guy he was going to Coeur D'Alene. "Oh well we're just going to a cabin about twenty miles up the road, but you'll pick up an intersection in the meantime so there should be a few more cars."

"Great," Brian said, and noticed that the guy's hand was underneath the girl's dress high on her leg. He got in the back of the truck, and as it pulled out on to the road again, he braced himself, prepared to be plummeted by the wind—it was a cold afternoon. Up there where the air is rare, some disc jockey said, it must be good.

It was a fast, dusty ride—seventy, he estimated, on a bumpy two-lane road—everybody drove like that around here. On the curves you were usually on the other side of the road, but it didn't much matter: there wasn't one chance in a thousand there'd be a car coming the other way. Brian felt his cheeks getting red—he was glad he'd worn a sweater. And then he was thinking ahead to the night—the moon on the lake, and a narrow pebble beach, and for the first time, the warmth . . .

The pickup stopped and Brian jumped out. He thanked the driver (who said "Good luck") and then looked over to the girl, meeting her eyes for a brief

moment and then glancing down to the ground again. The pickup pulled away and disappeared around a curve, and Brian looked around him. The road here was built impossibly into a cliff that jutted up to his right and, on the other side, fell maybe two hundred yards to a wide and lazy river that drained, he knew, into Coeur D'Alene lake about fifty miles up the road.

He walked across and looked down at the river: there were no cars coming; he stopped, felt his own silence. There was a cottage by the river and a short pier extending from it. About ten feet to one side down there was some refuse that floated forming a circle, motionless, protected from the river's gentle buffeting by the pier. Brian picked up a small stone from the shoulder of the road and threw it, aiming for the center of that circle. There was a wind down in the canyon and the stone curved and splashed far to the right of his aim. He tried the same thing a few more times, and finally with a long rock that was smooth and rounded at the end—it felt good in his palm—he hit the center—bingo! a victory—and the refuse quivered in the waves made by the rock, and spread out.

Around the curve behind him on the road roared a red-orange Mustang now—he couldn't understand why he hadn't heard it in the distance. He sprinted across the road and got his thumb out there, then noticed that there were five people in the car—no room for a hitchhiker. But the car stopped a hundred yards up the road and Brian ran towards it, his sleeping bag flopping from side to side on his back. He opened the front door and got in. They were Indians—three men and two women—and God knows they were drunk.

[. . . the next night, the whole damned cabin full of us, staggering around like a bunch of idiots, beer all over the floor and on the beds and everything. Somebody brought up Hibare who we'd been seeing around most every day, and we knew if we didn't act fast they'd take him to the back country. So we sat there thinking—if you can think when you're like that—about what to do to the bastard. And I don't know who it was, but somebody had a real flash.

We'd been cutting spruce pines all day, you know, the ones you can bend all the way to the ground and they won't break, and when work was over one of the men took a tremendous rock, attached it to the top of one of these spruces that he'd bent to the ground, and let her fly. The damned rock went soaring way back into the woods—it cleared the top of the trees. So this guy was thinking, if we could get some food into the top of one of these trees—and there was one right outside the cabin—Hibare would probably climb it to get to the food—Browns are really good climbers, you

know—maybe it didn't make much sense, but when you're drunk . . .]

Oh and drunk they were, the younger man (about thirty) driving and his wife next to him, biting at his shoulder playfully and her left leg wrapped around his that was on the accelerator, and in the back seat an older couple—sixty—making love between quaffs of beer, and another man beside them just about passed, head resting tilted and eyes rigid on the ceiling. And as the Mustang careened around the first curve—the country mountainous now, the road tortuous—the driver explained: “Migrants—all five of us—and we rented this Mustang down in Colorado and let me tell you we are having one *hell* of a time. Coeur D'Alene's next, then Missoula, Bozeman and down into Yellowstone before we start heading back. Have a beer.” Which Brian did and drank slowly, staring out his side window, saying little. “Yeah, I know, it's not much fun driving around with a bunch of drunk Indians but we'll get you there—we've been this way four days solid now and we've got this far.”

And then Coeur D'Alene appeared around a bend and across the lake, the fluorescent street lights of its main street a brilliant white-green in the dusk. A mining town originally—silver and copper, some gold—but now a resort, where people came from Seattle and Spokane because the Washington beaches are much too cold. The Indians let off Brian in the middle of town and he waved as they roared off, and he was thinking: that when you're driving through the mountains in a fast red car with a woman and something cold to drink, it doesn't much matter who you are, because you're everything you want to be. And then a sigh of happiness—five more hours and he'd lose what should have gone oh there years ago.

A brief dinner of pizza and a beer, and when he walked out of the restaurant it was dark—a clear and cold night. Brian adjusted the straps of his sleeping bag, started walking towards the lake two blocks away. Saturday night and it was loud: soul music coming from the bars and on the beach front, beer parties, and further down couples on moonlight swims. Some older people were playing shuffleboard in a picnic area illuminated by aluminum street-lamps, while a blue light hummed and electrocuted insects. Brian walked on down past all these people, took to a dirt road that led through pine trees a quarter mile to another beach where they had said he would find his mate. It was quiet there; he knelt down in the sand and spread it out with his fingers, looked out over the water reflecting a few early stars to the jagged contours of the Idaho mountains beyond.

It was eight or so, much too early, and Brian walked

back to a grove of pines about thirty feet from the water, flopped his sleeping bag down on the cushion of needles—he'd better try to get some sleep. He undressed there in the dark, climbed inside the bag and waited while it got warm from his body, his eyes taking in the pine trees converging way up there, almost out of sight.

[. . . and it was hard tying that rope to the top of the tree, but the rope was an inch thick—hell, you could have pulled in the biggest damn sea monster in the world with that thing. But we did it, and also tied some garbage—orange rinds and stuff—about three feet from the top of the tree to attract Hibare, you know, and then we went back into the cabin to drink a while longer and see what would happen, looking out the window.

Well it didn't take long, and about midnight along lopes old Hibare, sniffing all around, and then discovering that what he wants is up in that old pine tree. He looked around to see that nobody was watching and then I'll be damned if he didn't start climbing that spruce, and inside we were in hysterics, but quiet-like, patting each other on the back and everything. We watched that furry brown blob climb higher and higher—must have taken him fifteen minutes to get where we wanted him, and then we were about ready to rush outside. And it was strange, but I felt almost a little sad, because everybody knew it was the end of old Hibare . . .]

“Hi, there,” somebody said. Brian awoke and looked at his watch: it was midnight and much colder. He rubbed his eyes and rolled over on his other side and looked. There was a girl standing a few feet away—long hair but he couldn't see her face. She wasn't wearing a coat—a long sleeve blouse was all; her hands were shaking and she was cold.

“Hi,” Brian said, his eyebrows curled in confusion, his hands growing sweaty. Nothing to say; what the hell was there to say? “What are you doing out here this time of night?”, which was surely the wrong thing if anything was the wrong thing.

The girl took two steps forward so that Brian could see her face. It was a young faee—eleven or twelve—not very pretty but wide-eyed and innocent. “It's a long story,” she said.

“Well sit down and tell me,” Brian said, pointing to the ground beside him and then moving his finger to the other end of his sleeping bag, where maybe she'd be a little warmer. He sat up in his sleeping bag. No shirt on—he felt a little embarrassed—and he reached for the shirt that lay crumpled beside him.

“O.K.,” she said and sat down where he had asked her to. “We're from Spokane, you know, just up

here for the weekend—our family and another. We got here about six tonight and didn't go to a motel or anything, came right here—well—down the road where the picnic area is—to have a cookout. It was a lot of fun but then mommy and daddy and the other people that came with us started drinking a lot and so about nine or ten they were real drunk. Daddy started seeing how far out into the lake he could throw his beer cans—we were the only people on the beach then—and then he took mommy and threw her in the lake with all her clothes on—oh boy they were really drunk. I didn't like that much either so I went for a walk down here—they didn't know I left—I know that—and say you sleeping. I said "Hello" but you didn't say anything because you were asleep, so I went on walking down the road some more. I guess it was half an hour or so before I started back to where we had our cookout, and when I got back, they were gone. I was pretty scared—I still am, I guess—so I went in town but I couldn't find them anywhere. I didn't go looking for a policeman though because they were so drunk and all, so I walked back here, and here I am."

Brian swallowed hard once and then again—his mouth was getting dry—said, "How could they go off and leave you like that?"

"I don't know—they've never done it before—they get drunk pretty often though." She was shivering a lot now, her arms wrapped around her stomach and her teeth chattering, even though she was trying to hide it.

"What's your name?"

"Sherry."

"Brian." And then a short silence and another shiver from a cold blast from the lake. "Listen, you're pretty cold, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well listen," slowly and carefully, "You can get in here if you want—there's room for both of us or you can use it alone if you feel that way—and then tomorrow morning we'll go down to the police station and I'll help you find your parents, o.k.?"

"No—I don't think I'd better. You know," she said, and got to her feet.

Brian lay back in his sleeping bag, closed his eyes, then opened them again and reached for her hand. "No, really, you'll get real cold if you stayed out all night. I'd give you some money except I don't have much. I'll . . . I'll even face the other way." He pulled

her closer and after an instant of resistance she yielded to his strength. "Come on, I'm not going to hurt you," he said, and she lay down, put her feet into the bag, and slid in deep beside him. "There now, that's pretty nice, isn't it?" he said, rolling over as he promised so that her body was tight against his back.

"Yes, it's very warm in here," she said, and put her arms around him, her cheek against his spine.

"Now try to get some sleep, o.k.?"

"All right."

And as Brian closed his eyes he felt a sickness in his stomach that rose to his chest, his lungs, his throat, and quickly a tear came and scurried down, froze on his cheek. And then there were more tears, and what had been Sherry's arms around him became his own, the stars reflecting on the lake, the crackling fire, the whisper of the winds high in the pines, the laughter of the seven in the cabin:

. . . oh baby we were laughing so hard when we pulled that rope so that the tree bent down towards the ground. And Hibare's there hanging on tight and frozen to the limb, probably thinking, "Oh what the hell was so good about the damned garbage anyway?" So we pulled that tree all the way down almost to the ground—it was creaking and everything—and then one of the guys got a knife and cut through that rope—it seemed to take a real long time but Hibare still wasn't moving. But he cut it through clean—everybody's in hysterics by this time—and that damned tree sprang back so fast and vaulted Hibare out over all the trees and everything so that all we saw was this brown furry sweaty ball coming out of the top. Oh maybe he was feeling pretty good up there soaring over everything so high—probably thought he could reach out and touch a star—but unless you're human you don't know that you've got to come down again, and he must have hit *hard*, let me tell you. We never did find the bastard.

Laughter from the seven all around the fireplace but Brian lay in the corner, his hands over his face hiding tears and redness, and thinking through the beer and friendship that were here, but not his, to the words he had thought before but never written down:

Angels smoking cigarettes with legs tightly pressed
Tell me, strangely smiling, that united I fall. So
I'm here stiff and sticky, shaping mounds on the wall.



C. A. L.

To L. W.

Diffusing through my soul, thy presence seems
To penetrate the depths of dark Distrust
And so dissolves this earthly veil of dust
Which presently would smother dying dreams.
An old illusion now no longer teems
With visions clear of truthful men and just,
For all around me thrive deceit and lust
And untold lies abound as mountain streams.
Have I been born to fill a place of need,
Perhaps to learn and then, in turn, to teach?
Or did His hand so slip when formed my seed
And shape a mind which aggravates this breach
Between my life and Man's fallacious breed?

Thy patience with a Madman, I beseech . . .

The Search for "Joy" In Yeats' "Vacillation"

"Vacillation" is an invaluable guide to understanding William Butler Yeats. It represents almost every aspect of what he considered the basic problems of experience. The central meaning of the poem is difficult to grasp, however, because Yeats depended upon many cryptic references in its expression. The poem is personal, containing allusions to a variety of complete experiences already developed in earlier poems and yet to be developed in others. To Yeats "Vacillation" was a synthesis of already well-formed ideas, and each part of the poem is a symbolic representation of a whole body of thought and expression. I think Yeats wrote the poem in order to determine for himself what he could believe and how he could live when the ultimate problems of his life and of life in general were considered. To the reader, "Vacillation" may serve a similar purpose. It is also useful as a comprehensive statement in terms of which other poems by Yeats may be given a clearer position and meaning, but I think its greatest value lies in its thoroughness and in the authority this thoroughness gives to Yeats' final position. "Vacillation" is perhaps the most representative of Yeats' poems.

Its comprehensive nature may be seen in the first stanza or division, where Yeats appears to have fashioned a miniature synthesis of his ideas. It is here that the problem of the poem is stated, and vast categories of hope and belief are brought into question. First the basic condition of man is stated:

Between extremities
Man runs his course¹

¹ *The Collected Poems of William Butler Yeats* (New York, 1956), p. 245.

The two extremities are the opposing standards by which men judge their actions. According to one extreme, fostered by the human heart, the various objects of man's affection, fantasy, or general activity are worth seeking or exploiting. According to the opposite extreme, represented by the soul, these objects are worthless and should be abandoned in favor of a holy but obliterating truth. Man is normally governed by a balance of these "antinomies" or opposing laws, but inevitably

A brand, or flaming breath,
Comes to destroy
All those antinomies
Of day and night . . .

The "brand, or flaming breath" is the means by which a full and irrevocable consciousness of death and of life's transience is finally instilled in man. The distinction between "brand" and "flaming breath" is of two forms of bodily purgation. Serious illness or death, like a brand, makes man conscious of the weakness of his flesh and the need he has for a spiritual identity. The "flaming breath" is an image of intuition or the "holy spirit" that is passively received (a "living flame of love") and enables man to transcend his earthly concerns. I suspect that the "brand" is intended to be an image of death rather than disease, while the "flaming breath" is an image of the mystical counterpart to death or the "death-in-life" of Yeats' "Byzantium."

However the encounter is reached, the importance of it is that it brings to an end the conflict between "day and night." These images are explained in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," as they are here, in terms

of the antinomies. In the day man's selfish inclinations cherish the things of his visible world. He is blind to the truth which his soul, in the invisibility of night, cannot avoid perceiving: the activities of day will ultimately be of no consequence to the self, except as they may bring it remorse. Whatever personal instincts a man may retain after the flaming breath "consumes" him are destined to be annoyed by a persistent and highly impersonal conscience. He may feel transcendent at first but memory will torture him. Truth then, if we consider the message of the soul to be the final truth, is received rather dismally by man:

The body calls it death,
The heart remorse.

Knowing this, in the poem, Yeats wonders what relation truth *should* have to human life. How should man live if truth can bring him nothing but pain? Is man not justified in seeking happiness also? Indeed, as far as man knows, pleasure may be as sensible and justifiable a guide in life as a pious but unpleasant truth. If truth is painful,

What is joy?

In the second stanza or division Yeats establishes one of the few icons that are used repeatedly in the poem, to illustrate further the dual nature of man and enlarge his belief that man cannot be happy if his soul becomes too powerful. Man is compared to a tree

that from its topmost bough
Is half all glittering flame and half all green. . . .

The greenery is the self and the glittering flame is the soul. Either aspect, if viewed in a certain way, may seem to represent all that man is, for each tends to disclaim the reality of the other.

And half is half and yet is all the scene;
And half and half consume what they renew . . .

Each half claims dominion over the entirety of man, who, like Attis, is both consumed and renewed by each in turn as each is negated by the other. But Attis' death was more complete than the death experienced daily by man, and the renewal of his body in a tree is more nearly parallel to the renewal of Christ's body in the resurrection. The body's renewal in these cases is everlasting, for the negation of the self is complete. In man, however, these consuming and renewing forces are forever fluctuating until the soul's truth is ultimately brought to a full and painful consciousness. We may assume that Attis' renewal has resulted literally from the death of his original body, which final pain is the final penance for sinfulness. Man, however, may consider Attis the model of his hope without realizing

the total self-abnegation that is necessary to attain such a renewal.

And he that Attis' image hangs between
That staring fury and the blind lush leaf
May know not what he knows, but knows not grief.

To know what Attis knows would be to suffer grief or remorse, for the only hope of man would then be in what might occur, if he is pious, after he has died. No man is satisfied by such messages of the "staring fury." Is man to be elated by the notion that all he does is sinful? Yeats even describes the hoped-for condition the soul seems to offer as a kind of mummification, not as a real renewal. In "All Soul's Night" he speaks in the soul's voice of the truth man will not accept:

No man can drink from the whole wine.
I have mummy truths to tell
Whereat the living mock,
Though not for sober ear
For maybe all that hear
Should laugh and weep an hour upon the clock.²

The truth is so terrible that men mock it. They may look hopefully to Attis, but they will continue to live blindly, and perhaps somewhat pleasantly, until the truth becomes inevitable. He lives in the "dolphin-torn . . . gongtormented sea"³ of "Byzantium"; but until the gong rings out his certain doom "he knows not grief," and to Yeats at this point that is the important clue to his question, "What is joy?"

The third division of the poem is composed of two stanzas, each representing the extremity of thought and action that would result from strict obedience either to the self or to the soul. The first stanza begins with the self's injunction to

Get all the gold and silver that you can,
Satisfy ambition, animate
The trivial days and ram them with the sun.

This statement might be considered an extreme presentation of the views of My Self in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," who uses the objects of his immediate attention

For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematic of the night,
And claim[s] as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.⁴

By calling his effort a "crime," My Self indirectly consents to the soul's disapproval of joy in temporal things, and in the long run "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" seems a somewhat frantic effort by My Self to deny something in which he cannot help believing. How can he "cast out remorse"⁵ if he admits the effort is a crime? In "Vacillation" Yeats chooses to discourage the self's

² *Ibid.*, p. 226.
³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.
⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.
⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

interests, but he does not do so by calling them criminal or sinful. He simply reminds the self that its activities will not be satisfying:

... upon these maxims meditate;
All women dote upon an idle man
Although their children need a rich estate;
No man has ever lived that had enough
Of children's gratitude or woman's love.

The implication is that there is little joy in living within "the blind lush leaf" of acquisitiveness.*

The second stanza of this division, on the other hand, projects the course of a life perpetually measured by the soul's harsh command:

No longer in Lethean foliage caught
Begin the preparation for your death
And from the fortieth winter by that thought
Test every work of intellect or faith,
And everything that your own hands have wrought,
And call those works extravagance of breath
That are not suited for such men as come
Proud, open-eyed and laughing to the tomb.

This passage is a sufficient explanation of why My Self in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" concludes that he may as well accept his inadequacies, since

How in the name of Heaven can he escape
That defiling and disfiguring shape . . .
And what's the good of an escape
If honour find him in a wintry blast?⁶

The strain of such criticism as the soul will make of man, should he live by its measure, is as much as he can bear. In the hopeful passage that concludes "Among School Children" Yeats considers it a blessing that man and his labor are one and the same. Here, however, if that idea is correct, then man is cursed. In "Among School Children" Yeats assumes that man has a capacity "to pleasure soul," and assumption that is rarely made in other poems, and that seems discredited in "Vacillation," making the concept of a unity of being and action here seem terrible rather than joyous.

Shortly after the age of fifty, having lived and measured his life by both the antinomies of self and soul, and perhaps having reached the age where "bodily decrepitude" and "wisdom" replace the "ignorance" of youth,⁷ Yeats had an unforgettable experience that he describes in the fourth section of "Vacillation."

My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,
An open book and empty cup
On the marble table-top.⁸

*A sentiment that appears again and again in Yeats' poetry, as in "The Tower" or "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen."

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁷ *Ibid.*, "After Long Silence," p. 260.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

The "open book" may represent a Bible and the "empty cup" a chalice, indicating that Yeats has drunk the "whole wine" of his situation. The table-top is marble like a crypt and the scene gives Yeats an intense consciousness of death. Then:

While on the shop and street I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed . . .

Although he looks at the things of this world he feels that his physical identity is being consumed by a higher, more spiritual consciousness.

And twenty minutes more or less
It seemed, so great my happiness,
That I was blessed and could bless.

Yeats has encountered the "flaming breath" of his first stanza. He perceives the transcendence of life and responds, initially, with joy and a sense of transcendence. Because of this transcendence he is blessed and can bless. He might express his feeling as does My Self in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul":

We are blest by everything
Everything we look upon is blest,

except that the things that may be blessed in "Vacillation" fill a spiritual totality (they are "purged images"), while the "everything" My Self is referring to (with less assurance) is a physical world that exists in spite of or in defiance of spiritual truths.

The "happiness" of the fourth division of the poem does not last. It is true that the "antinomies" are in a sense destroyed, but Yeats continues to exist, and his eyes continue to see the physical world of which he is still a part. His mystical experience brings him in the fifth division of the poem to a condition of grief and remorse.

Although the summer sunlight gild
Cloudy leafage of the sky,
Or wintry moonlight sink the field,
In storm-scattered intricacy,
I cannot look thereon,
Responsibility so weighs me down.

Clearly, Yeats' consummation has been only partial, though his vision is nearly complete. And he has nothing to be happy about as long as he is conscious of his sinfulness.

Things said or done long years ago
Or things I did not say or do,
Weigh me down, and not a day
But something is recalled,
My conscience or my vanity appalled.

His guilt prevents him from experiencing more than twenty or so minutes of transcendence. But this is inevitable, for Yeats is a man. He has not transcended the human lot so much as he has expanded his hu-

manity, as he seems to say in "Streams and Sun at Glendalough":

Repentance keeps my heart impure;
But what am I that dare
Fancy that I can
Better conduct myself or have more
Sense than a common man?⁹

Although Yeats was unusually aware of the nature of his own problem, he realized that it was universal; and in the sixth part of "Vacillation" he extended his theme into yet another set of images, showing how men of distant times and localities perceived the same truth. "The great lord of Chou" is apparently master of a vast estate, but a transcendental impulse makes him cry, "Let all things pass away." A Babylonian conqueror surveys his weary but victorious army, and, seeing the emptiness of their conquest, also says, "Let all things pass away." These men, along with Yeats, perceive the vanity of their efforts. They realize that

From man's blood-sodden heart are sprung
Those branches of the night and day
Where the gaudy moon is hung.

The moon is like an Attis that only seems to die and only appears to be reborn. Like man it is ever changing, fluctuating between day and night, self and soul, illuminating the transient things of day one moment, but repenting for these things the next. Man may say, "Let all things pass away"; but as long as he is human, he cannot entirely mean it. He clings to his individuality just as he clings to the individuality of the things around him. He wants these things to last. In "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" Yeats wrote

But is there any comfort to be found?
Man is in love and loves what vanishes,
What more is there to say?

It seems, however, that there is one way in which this desperate fact may be stated truthfully without the observer experiencing despair, and that is in art.

What's the meaning of all song?
'Let all things pass away.'

Yeats saw no enduring joy in following his spirit's or his self's commands. In poetry, however, he saw a means of achieving a realistic view of his shortcomings in a relatively permanent and perhaps a perfect form. Through art he could cling to the images of day but examine his life with clarity. Only in this way could he gain personal happiness. The perfection of art would purify him, but within the bounds of his individuality. What is joy? It is the achievement of art. In "Lapis Lazuli" Yeats developed this theme to such an extent that I believe he literally felt art to be the only means of achieving a realistic happiness. The flaws of Ham-

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

let and Lear, or of the lapis lazuli itself, are not consumed by the symmetry of art, but are pictured by it as clearly as if illumined by the soul itself. These flaws are thereby made part of a redeeming completeness, for by asserting themselves in art they are given a role in a perfect truth. In poetry man can write, "Let all things pass away," yet achieve the opposite by keeping these imperfect and vanishing things within the considered thoughts of men.

The seventh part of "Vacillation" explores further the possibility of finding happiness in artistic expression. The human heart, which most needs this outlet, argues with the soul:

The Soul. Seek out reality, leave things that seem.
The Heart. What, be a singer born and lack a theme?
The Soul. Isaiah's coal, what more can man desire?
The Heart. Struck dumb in the simplicity of fire!
The Soul. Look on that fire, salvation walks within.
The Heart. What theme had Homer but original sin?

The Heart does not argue in terms of any value other than that of the happiness it knows it can find in art. Each argument of The Soul is shown to be irrelevant to that issue, the important one. The Heart has learned to respect the truth of its own nature and abandon the more austere truth that threatens its one source of satisfaction. Yeats compares himself to Homer, who lived in darkness but with eloquence.

It might be argued that once an individual has encountered himself as Yeats evidently did in his "crowded London shop," it is no longer possible for him to adopt a position of innocence. But Yeats is not regressing in the least by choosing to defy the truths of his soul. His decision is that of a mature artist, not of a naive young man, and his ultimate position in "Vacillation" is that of forthright paganism like the paganism of "Sailing to Byzantium." In the latter poem Yeats chooses to hope for an eternal individuality—an idea that pleases him—rather than for the oblivion of death:

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the *artifice* of eternity.¹⁰

The eighth and final division of "Vacillation" is Yeats' apology and farewell to his soul, which is represented somewhat oddly (or humorously) by the contemporary theologian, Friedrich Von Hügel:

Must we part, Von Hügel, though much alike, for we
Accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity?

Then Yeats restates his concept of sanctity and its rewards as he has imagined it. Saint Theresa is an Attis whose body is renewed in death:

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

The body of Saint Theresa lies undecayed in tomb,
Bathed in miraculous oil, sweet odours from it come,
Healing from its lettered slab. Those self-same
 hands perchance
Eternalized the body of a modern saint that once
Had scooped out Pharaoh's mummy.

This is the "mummy-truth" that Yeats good-humoredly
mocks. He does not claim, though, that *his* position
will be so eternally blessed as that of Saint Theresa.
And he realizes that the pious, ascetic standard *does*
have its rewards. But

 I—though heart might find relief
Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief
What seems most welcome in the tomb—play a predestined
 part.
Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.

It is Homer rather than Von Hügel that Yeats personally
believes to be worth emulating. The rewards of

sanctity do not seem worth the pain it brings, while art,
though born of transient things and imperfections, pro-
vides the joy of self-affirmation.

"Vacillation" defines the basic aspirations, disap-
pointments, and commitments of Yeats' experience as
thoroughly as any poem he wrote. His self-examina-
tion here is so complete that the position he reaches
may be considered the one toward which his pro-
foundest experiences led him. In "Vacillation" Yeats
seems to say that in art alone is he able to find the
happiness or the "joy" he has been seeking. Only in
art is he content to say of men and the world that

 What they undertook to do
 They brought to pass;
[But] All things hang like a drop of dew
 Upon a blade of grass.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibid.*, "Gratitude to Unknown Instructors," p. 249.



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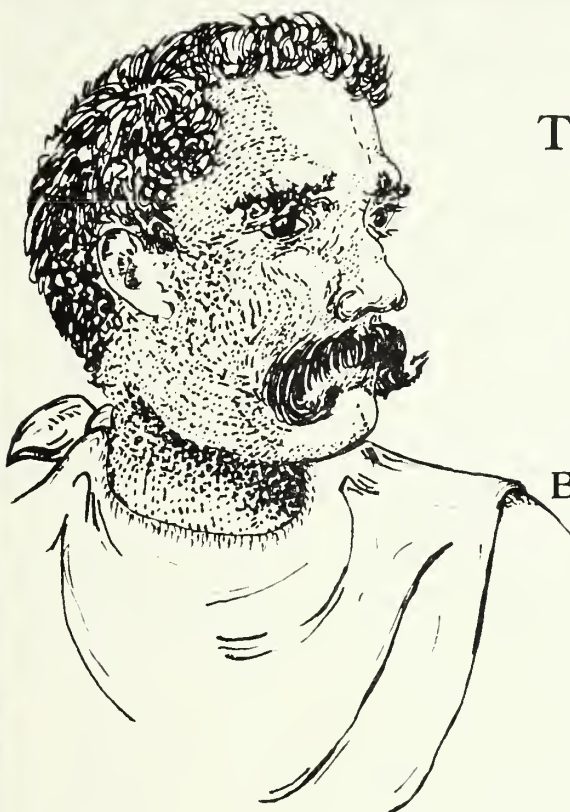
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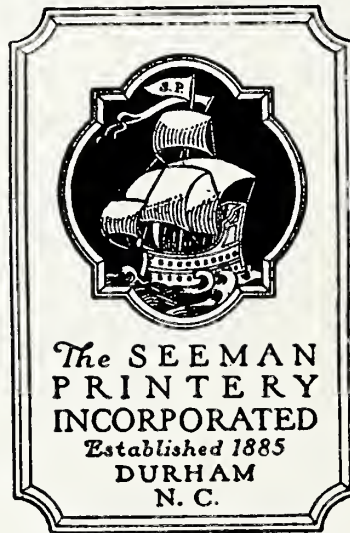
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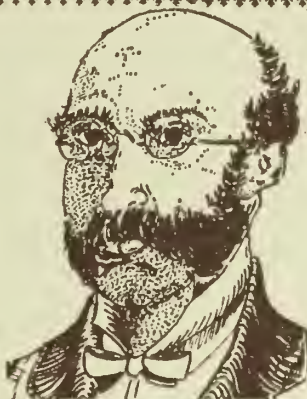
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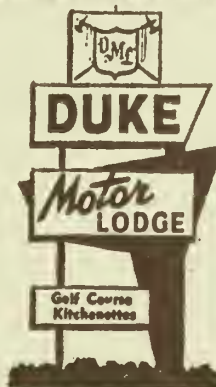
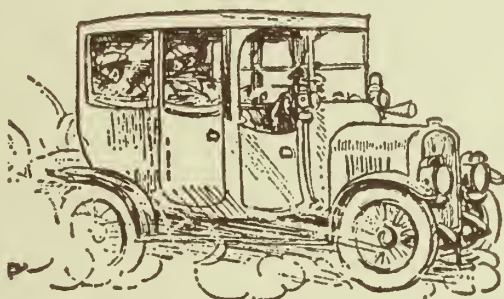
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Challenge, November-December 1965, page 46.

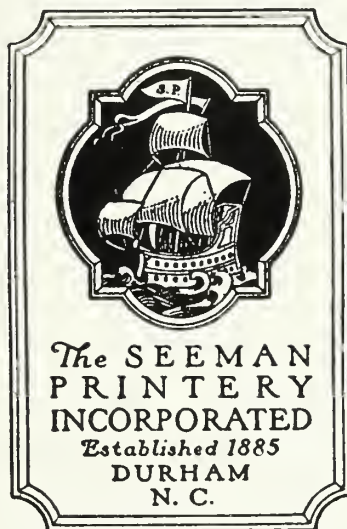
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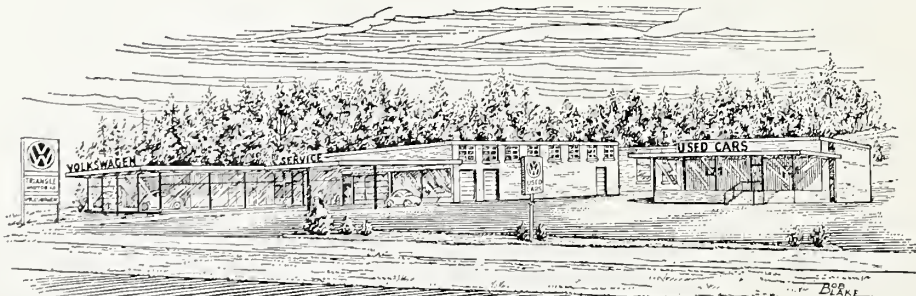
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CONTENTS

STORIES

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| All My Lovely Daughters | 5 |
| <i>by Josephine Humphreys</i> | |
| The Doll | 9 |
| <i>by Louise Bibb</i> | |
| Four-Eyes and Me | 18 |
| <i>by Ann Saalbach</i> | |

POEMS

- | | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Young Welk | 8 |
| <i>by M. Poirier</i> | |
| Curse Renewed | 13 |
| <i>by C.A.L.</i> | |
| Winter | 14 |
| <i>by James Mullen</i> | |
| Almost | 16 |
| <i>by Peggy Payne</i> | |
| The Trilogy of the Pearls | 17 |
| <i>by William Woodward</i> | |

ART

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Photograph | 4 |
| <i>by Paul Seder</i> | |
| Chalk Drawing | 7 |
| <i>by Linda Bennett</i> | |
| Photograph | 11 |
| <i>by Fred Daugherty</i> | |
| Charcoal Drawing | 12 & 13 |
| <i>by Heidi Sparks</i> | |
| Linocut | 15 |
| <i>by Larry Funk</i> | |
| Drawing | 16 |
| <i>by George K. Ganaway</i> | |
| Photograph | 17 |
| <i>by Bill Boyarsky</i> | |

* Correction

The Still Life on page 7 of our last issue was incorrectly credited to Linda Pannill instead of Sheryl Smith.

Published quarterly September, December, March, and May by the students of Duke University.

The publication of articles on controversial topics does not necessarily mean that the Editor or the University endorses them. The names and descriptions of all characters in the fiction of this magazine are fictitious. Any resemblance to any person or persons is not intended and is purely coincidental.



Jo Humphreys

All My Lovely Daughters

Matthew Taylor Gilland awoke suddenly, early, finding he had thrown off the blanket and sheet from the top of his body. Lying still, he listened to the slow hiss of the radiator next to his side of the bed, its valve spouting a thin cloud of steam. His naked chest and arms felt wrapped in the gentle heat of the radiator while the winter air of the room played around his shoulders and ears. Beneath the blankets, the rest of him still slept unconsciously comfortable and immoveable. Traces of a dream lingered in his waking mind, and the point of this dream had been that, at the age of thirty-two, he saw his life change, from a life of preparing and looking forward to things to a life which was the one he had been spending thirty-two years preparing for. This feeling was the residue of the actual dream, which he could not remember in detail. Then he lost even the residue feeling, and knew he was awake, saw his pale chest and the sunken hollow in its center that Sarah liked. Sarah was back, curled up next to him, and on the other side of the bed was the crib he had brought down from the attic for the new daughter she had brought home. He moved closer to her, curling his long body around hers, feeling the warmth of her back through flannel on his chest and stomach. She slept deep and in peace, as if sleeping were her natural state, and waking only a necessity forced by the fact that others wanted to get up and do things to the world, needing her to fill their stomachs and listen to their plans. She slept like a child herself, one hand under her pillow, her legs pulled up close under the long nightdress.

"Sarah, mother of queens and angels," he said, sliding a hand to her round stomach, round and warm, past home of three Gilland daughters, "Awake, awake." She moved her legs and made a humming noise. Matthew held two fingers above her eyes, and when she opened them her head jumped back deeper into the pillow.

"Welcome home, my Helen," he said. "You've been away for twenty years."

"Ten days," she smiled, her voice still half asleep and low.

"But wife," he said, "you brought home a child. I demand to know, I command you to confess the origin of that child."

"I found it," she said.

"The story of the Pharaoh's daughter to her father on the throne. They believed her then. But the world is too old and wise now for the stories of young girls."

"Matthew," she said. "Don't be sacrilegious."

"Ah, but I'm not," he said. "I love religion. I love the hymns and chants and the secret mysteries." He began singing in a quiet voice, "Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our Fathers."

"Praised and exalted above all for ever," they sang together. Sarah was a good girl. She would sing when she knew he wanted her to, would sing sad songs at night or hymns in the morning. She sang to their daughters while she brushed their hair, thin yellow hair of Gilland generations, unlike her own thick brown falling now in curling snakes over the pillow.

"Let's get the new one and see who it looks like," he said.

"Who she looks like."

Matthew sat up in bed and put one bare leg over the side, then pulled it back in. "It's much warmer in here with you," he said. He wanted her to get the baby. There seemed something terribly fragile about his own children, and he preferred to trust them to the sure, strong arms of his wife.

"Matthew," said Sarah, "I wanted to ask you something first."

"You may have one question," he said, lying back upon his pillow with arms above head.

"Do you mind it's not a boy?" she said.

Matthew pulled his legs up to make a tent of the sheets. "You have already asked that," he said. "What good are two daughters? Everyone knows you need three." He turned and leaned over her. "Ten daughters I want," he said. "Ten Sarahs, ten Helens, Cleos, Julicts. No man has three such beautiful daughters as I."

"Men always wants sons," she said under the blanket she had pulled up over her mouth. Her eyes

were dark and wet, still accustoming themselves to the air and light.

"An old wives' tale," said Matthew. "Sarah, my Sarah," he said. "Don't worry about sons."

She got out of bed, moving slowly, smoothly to the crib, then holding her child in a cocoon of soft blankets came back to the bed. Matthew saw the yellow hair, the eyes closed and still sleeping.

"She sleeps like you," he said.

"Everyone sleeps alike," said his wife.

"No, Sarah, your sleep is the sleep of birds and small animals, natural and quiet, warm in your own skin-heat and undisturbed. Do you dream?"

"I dream," she answered.

"What are you dreams?"

"I never remember," she said, turning on her side to him and the child, nestling the cocoon in the place made by the curve of her stomach and thighs.

"Natural dreams," he said. "Birds never remember their dreams. I had a dream in the night; I woke and still knew the dream for a moment. They stay with me. I woke you last night."

"When?"

"You don't remember," he said. "You have a gift, Cassandra, it comes to you in disguise at night, while you're asleep in that other world of yours."

"Oh Matthew," she said, "I just sleep. Everyone sleeps."

"Yes, but last night I woke you," he said.

Matthew touched the sleeping head of his child. "How do you name this child?"

"Elizabeth Warrenton Gilland," she said. "You chose that name."

"No," he said. "I chose Scheherezade Rosalind Gilland."

"Why?"

"Scheherezade because I like stories. Rosalind because she was a beautiful boy-girl."

"Matthew, I *know* you —"

"Sarah, Sarah, Sarah," he said, "I didn't mean that. It was a joke." He kissed her brown hair, and the fine yellow hair of his daughter. "I'm going for coffee." He rolled out of bed, and put on the old robe hanging across the chair.

"Wait," she said, "you forgot to tell me about last night when you woke me up."

"Later, my girl," he said, stopping in the doorway. "My girls, my lovely girls."

Matthew went downstairs. His legs came out from the robe as he went down the steps, thin white legs with a fuzz of light brown hair like his chest. In the kitchen he put a pot of water on the stove, and fixed a

tray with two cups while the water boiled. His hands were thin. He had the body of a young boy, and a face that would look childish even when it was old in years, with bright laughing eyes and a short nose. He felt exhilarated and physically whole again now that Sarah was back, and he would care for her and her new child, their last child because the birth had been difficult. Matthew sat down in the kitchen chair to wait for the water to boil. He whistled a tune, making up new notes and combinations as he whistled; then the whistling slowed, and stopped, as parts of his dream began to come back on him in sudden, detailed, unconnected flashes, in pictures and terrible heavy feelings. He tried to dispel them, to send them away by his own will, but then found himself thinking, "A son, my God how I wanted a son."

Matthew stood up, as if to shake off these remainders of the night's vision. He went to the stove, stuck one finger into the pot of water and saw that it was hot enough even though it hadn't boiled. He poured the water into the coffee pot as the steam arose in bursts and disappeared, swallowed up by the cold dry air of the room. He remembered to put extra lumps of sugar on the tray in a small thin china dish. Then he went back up the steps to his room, carrying the tray, once more feeling the cold upon his legs as the robe fell open with each step.

She had fallen asleep again, on her side, carefully holding her child in the circle of her arms, next to her, with the brown blanket pulled up close about the two of them. Matthew put the tray down and watched her breathing slowly and calmly; he got back into bed beside her, leaving his robe on. Leaning over her face, a face which like the rest of her had grown rounded and more lovely since their marriage, while he had grown thin, he touched his mouth to hers.

"May nothing disturb you, my Sarah, nothing ever wake you in the night."

He lay back on his own side of the bed and did not move until he felt his daughter stir beside him a few minutes later. He remembered the coffee would be getting cold. He picked up the child, moving Sarah's right arm to do so. She opened her eyes and watched him in silence as he held the child.

"She looks like you," Sarah said, moving closer to him so that her legs touched his and their two bodies enclosed the child between them. Matthew saw the happiness in her eyes and heard it in her voice.

"We're going to need a bigger bed," he said, knowing his other daughters would be in the room soon. "This old bed wasn't built for five."

"For a few minutes each morning it will hold us,"

said Sarah. "Matthew, did you say I woke up last night?" Her second sleep had made the morning waking and talking with Matthew seem distant and unreal.

"You did," he said. "I woke you up, by accident, because I was having a dream. You sat up and comforted me, and you said 'go back to sleep, Matthew, I am home now.'"

"I don't remember that," she said.

"It's the gift of Harun Al Rashid," said Matthew, smiling and smoothing her hair with one hand. "It's the gift of prophecy. Every night you wake and tell me the secrets of life, and then you sleep and forget it all."

"Matthew, really," she said, catching his hand by the wrist, feeling it thin and bony. "Did you really have a dream last night?" Sarah thought he must not have eaten well while she was gone, and while he answered she planned what she would give him for breakfast.

"Yes, I did," he said.

"A bad dream?"

Matthew put his hand again on her stomach. "I used to have a flat stomach," she said, smiling.

"I like it better now," he said.

"Was it a bad dream?" Sarah said.

"No, not a bad dream."

"What was it?"

"It was a lovely dream," he said. "It was a dream of Sarah, round Sarah, sleeping peaceful love Sarah, and her three daughters, and of Matthew Gilland, maker of daughters."

She smiled again, and loved him more. "You are really glad, aren't you?"

"I'm the gladdest man in the world."

His daughters came into the room, children now but he could see them years later as new Sarahs, and mothers of sons. They climbed onto the bed and looked at the new daughter, and burrowed under the blankets over Matthew's legs. They rolled onto Matthew's chest and kissed him, and he gave them cubes of white sugar while he poured coffee for Sarah and himself.

"Good morning, daughters," he said. "I'm the gladdest man in the world." Sarah looked at him quickly, and thought there was something in his face and voice she had never seen, and for the first time she wondered if her husband had secrets from her. But she let it pass and when he smoothed the yellow heads of the three girls, clustered about him in bed, she saw that he was very happy, and she wondered if the milk would come in time for him to have a glass at breakfast.

"All my lovely daughters," whispered Matthew, as his long thin arms closed over his children, their hair falling fine and long over his white skin, and his wife rose from the bed with slow careful motions of her body, humming a tune as she went downstairs.



M. Poirier

Young Whelk

Ebbing, the crest bubbles and breaks
Hair thin, churning its sandy cud,
Regurgitates a fragile fragment thinly
Poised above the tide—one small
Whorled castle, drifted and swept
Past the safe still line beyond the breakers,
Coughed out, left pulsing where naked feet
Can spy it, a hunter's prize, trophy
And tribute to small grasping conceit,
Bravely still pulsing, yearning its salty home
—Until, nerveless flesh still, the patient
Framework but a trinket now, drops
And is ground to dust. God!
Waste is heartless, profligate, too common
To be cruel. He holds me in
His hand, then tightly, tightly, closes
His fist.

The Doll

by Louise Bibb

The hot summer sun beat down on the forsythia in the Jones's back yard, brightening the color of the little yellow flowers until they gleamed like tiny suns themselves. The happy discord of children's voices rose from Cathy's sandbox, which was partially shaded by the bush in the late summer morning.

Ann Channing squinted in the glaring light and brushed back her fine, blond hair with one hand, smearing her face with dirt. The red ribbon which had held it back had fallen out unheeded while she was building her small sand house. She rose on her knees and surveyed the box with the critical, practiced eye of a sandbox engineer. "We gotta have a road," she concluded. She drew a tentative line as close as she could to the middle of the sandbox. "This look like half?"

"Uh-huh," said Cathy. "I'll pave it." She ran her palm carefully along the line and looked with pride at the road, disregarding the dents where she had leaned on it.

"I'm buildin a fence around my property," said Ann. She carefully pressed a mound of sand between her thumb and fingers, forming a fence along her side of the road.

Cathy looked admiringly at Ann's fence. "So'm I," she said quickly. Ann was three years older, now that she'd had her sixth birthday. Cathy gave the road a final pat and pressed a large, awkward wall of sand together with her hands. Her puffy, babyish face glowed as she admired her intricate structure, and she rubbed one eye with a sand-covered hand in the morning glare.

Ann squinted at her property critically and began constructing a driveway and walk to the house. "Here come Tina and Joel," she exclaimed presently, looking up. "We'll haf' to give 'em some property."

A little girl was coming toward them over the grass. Her long, brown braids were tangled and fuzzy as though they had not been combed for a day or so. Although she could not have been more than six, there was a mature, almost shrewd expression in her dull, hazel eyes that made her appear older. She was following her one-and-a-half year old brother, and, although she seemed impatient, she conscientiously kept pace with him. In his arms Joel clutched a grinning, red

and white plush teddy bear, so large that he gave the appearance of the bear walking backwards. The little boy toddled along, his sister watching him intently. When he stumbled over a root, she sprang to him and caught him before he fell. She picked him up and carried him to the sandbox, although he was half as large as she was. There she set him down, returned for the bear, and dropped it on the ground beside him.

"Hi, Tina," said Ann. "You want some property?"

"O K," she replied carelessly. Then she said with authority, "Don't give any to Joel. He doesn't want to play." He was sitting contentedly beside the bear, pulling up grass. Tina surveyed the sandbox with sophisticated boredom and then noticed the doll carriage standing a few feet away. Ann had left it there when she went to play with Cathy in the sand, and now it stood forgotten.

Tina walked lightly toward it and peered inside. There lay a large, expensive looking doll wrapped in a pink blanket. The blond hair fell in ringlets over her forehead, and her closed eyes were fringed with dark lashes. She had pretty pink cheeks and a small pointed nose.

Tina looked at it for a minute and then went back to the sandbox. She sat down on the edge of it. The bored expression had hardened into a half-frown, and she flicked a lump of sand onto Ann's property.

"You can have this much, Tina." Ann carefully drew a wavering line with her forefinger, marking off about a third of the box.

"That's not fair!" Tina pouted. "You have more than I do." She thrust out her lower lip deliberately so that her chin wrinkled up.

"No, I don't either!"

"You do so! And so does Cathy!" Her dull eyes glared at Ann.

"Oh, aw-right. You can have to here." Ann reluctantly marked off a few more inches. With a violent swoop Tina plowed out the first line. The pouting expression vanished from her face, and her small, pinched mouth smoothed into a triumphant smile.

A short silence followed during which Ann rebuilt her fence on the new line and Tina set to work building

a house. Tina was the first to speak again. "My house aren't havin' a pointed roof," she remarked pleasantly after several unsuccessful attempts to produce one. "I live here, an' I have two children. Jane an' Mary, an' I love Jane, but I don't love Mary at all." She drew a front walk to her house with her thumb. "I'm givin' a party today at my house. You comin'?"

"Uh-huh, I guess so," answered Ann. "Why'd you bring Joel?" He was now sitting quietly, chewing one ear of his bear.

"Oh, Mamma went to the grocery store an' she said for me to take care of him an' not let him fall down."

"Oh. Where'd you get your bear, Joel?" asked Ann. "It's real purty."

"Mamma," said Joel. A few inarticulate sounds followed.

"I don't think he's so purty," said Tina, stirring the sand aimlessly and staring downward. "I think he's ugly. An' besides," her voice was lower, "I don't like bears."

"Where'd he get him, Tina?"

"Mamma brought it to him from the store." Her voice was expressionless now, and she was slowly tearing down one corner of her house with a small stick.

"Oh, what'd she bring you?"

Tina pushed the stick hard into the sand until it snapped. Her hard, dull little eyes glared for an instant at Ann, and then past her, as if into the forsythia. Then all at once her face relaxed into a quietly scornful pose. She looked back down at her property, tilted her head to one side as if to get a better view, and smoothed out her back yard in loose, circular swoops. "She brought me a doll," she responded carelessly. "She's a beautiful doll. Like yours, only bigger. She has yellow curly hair an' pink cheeks an' she's just beautiful." The scorn was giving way now to enthusiasm. She looked up, and her dull eyes almost shone. "She bought me a lot of clothes to go with her. I think she cost an awful lot. Even more than Joel's bear. She was the biggest doll in the whole store."

"Oh! Why didn't you bring her over?" Ann cried eagerly.

"Oh, she can't come out today." Tina's bored expression had returned, and she seemed absorbed in smoothing out a hill in her back yard. "She's caught the measles an' the doctor said she had to stay in. Mamma bought her in a real big store —"

"Oh!" exclaimed Cathy. "I was in a real big store yesterday an' Mamma left me an' she had to come back for me a long time later, an' I was all by myself for a long time!"

"If Mamma left Joel in the store she'd go back for

him, but she wouldn't go back for me. My doll has blue eyes, real big ones, an' she closes 'em when she's asleep." Tina patted her back yard and then smoothed out the hand prints.

A breeze rustled the forsythia, and a yellow bloom fell on Ann's roof. She picked it out carefully. By this time her enthusiasm over the doll had dwindled. She pushed a small toy car over the road to the shapeless mound of sand which served as Cathy's house. "Where's your driveway? I'm comin' over to see you, Cathy."

"There."

"Oh."

"I'm over here at my swimmin' pool," said Cathy.

"OK, I'll come over soon as I park. Where is it?"

"Here!" came the indignant reply. She pointed to a small, oblong hole which she had been digging tediously for several minutes.

"OK, now I've got my bathin' suit on," said Ann. Then, in a stilted voice, rising and falling meticulously, "Good afternoon, Mrs. Jones."

"Hullo, Mrs. Cha —"

"You know somethin'?" shouted Tina, her shrill voice rising above theirs. When she had partially gained their attention, she continued: "I could jump off that roof, if I wanted to." She nodded carelessly toward the Jones's house.

"Could you really?" breathed Cathy, fascinated.

"'Course! I could do it right now, if I wanted to." She said in a nonchalant voice.

"But nobody could jump off the roof, Tina," Ann objected.

"Jus' 'cause you couldn't! I could so! If I wanted to!"

"I bet you couldn't!"

"I could so jump off that roof!"

"She could so!" Cathy added.

"Why don't you do it, then?" suggested Ann doggedly.

Tina shrugged. "'Cause I don't want to." She tilted her head from side to side, preoccupied with smoothing her property. Suddenly she glanced up. "There comes Mamma," she whispered. "We gotta go. Come on, Joel."

A white car pulled to a stop beside the house next door. Her mother stepped out, dropped her cigarette on the ground, and lifted two large bags of groceries.

Tina helped the child to his feet and steered him across the grass, watching him more intently than before. The huge bear blocked the way, however, and he stumbled and fell. Since he had landed on the bear, he was not hurt, but he let out a loud wail of

self-pity. The woman dropped the bags on the hood of the car, sprang toward him, and picked him up. "Good Lord, I told you not to let him fall." She lifted one bag of groceries while Tina took the other, and the three disappeared silently into the house.

* * * * *

"Oh, my doll can't come out today. She's caught the measles an' the doctor said she has to stay in. She's takin' lots of pills an' medicine."

"But that's what you always say, Tina," objected Ann.

"Well, it's so. Mamma said I could play for a while."

"How long?"

"I don't know. For a while."

"We're takin' our children to town," said Cathy.

"I'm makin' a necklace." Tina dropped into the grass and began to string clover. "I'd rather make necklaces, anyway. I'm makin' one for my doll."

"Why don't you bring her over, Tina?"

"I told you. 'cause she's sick."

"I bet she doesn't even have a doll like that," suggest Ann mercilessly.

"I do so!" Tina's hazel eyes glared from her small, pinched face.

"She does so," echoed Cathy.

"Well, why don't you bring her over then, Tina? We'll take our children to the doctor, an' you can bring yours, too."

"No!" she shouted emphatically. "She's too sick. The doctor comes to see her."

"Tina." Her mother's voice was insistent. "Tina!" Tina leaped up and flew towards her across the grass.

"I wish Tina'd bring her doll over," said Cathy wistfully after Tina had disappeared.

"Well, I'm goin' over an' tell her to bring her when she comes out again," Ann announced. She started toward Tina's house with Cathy at her heels. They reached the yard and ran toward the front steps. On the front walk they stopped, however, and they stood there listening in awe to the voices which sounded through the open door.

"Of all things! Trying to blame it on your brother."

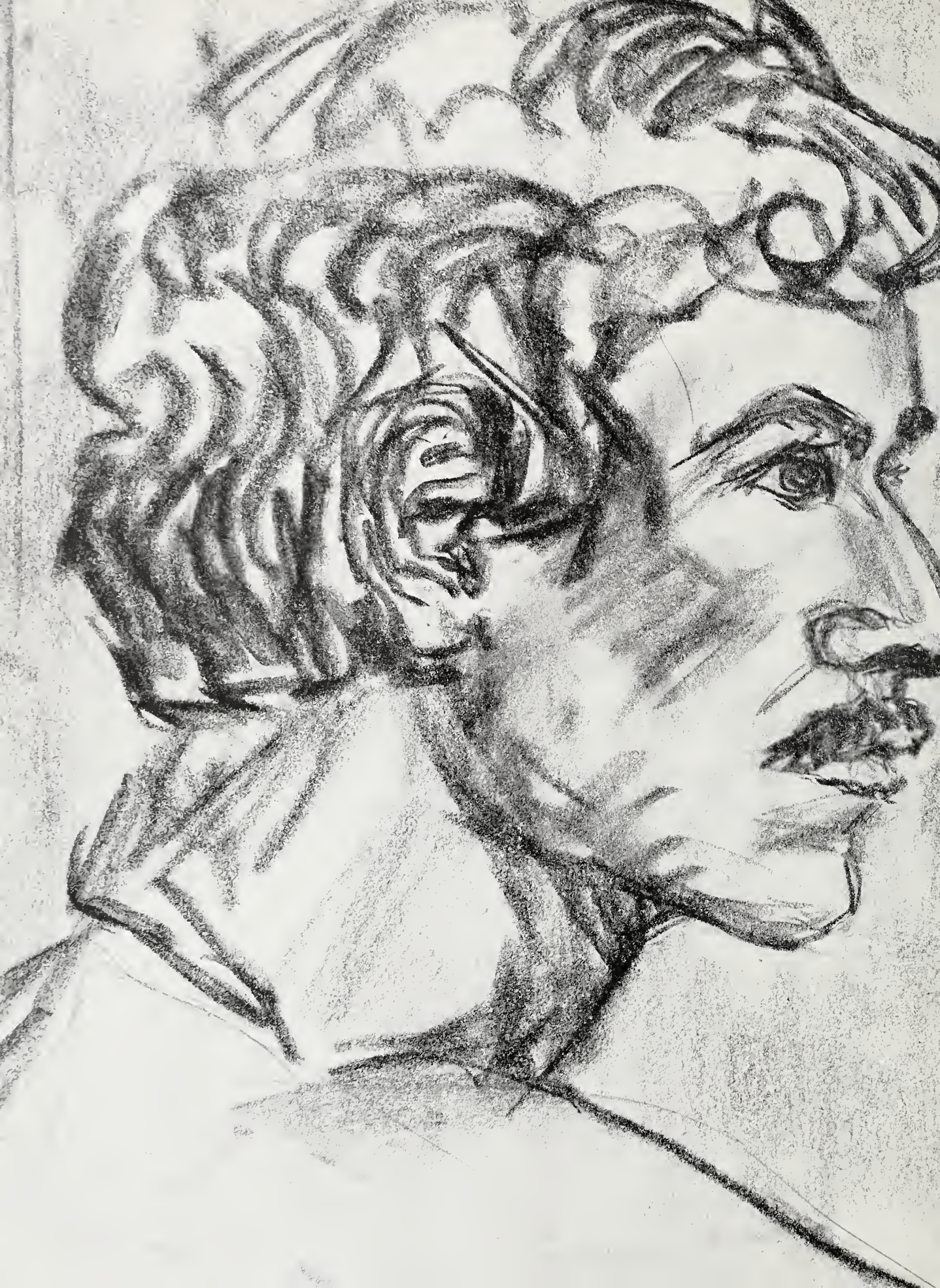
"But, Mamma, I wasn't —"

"All right, I didn't ask for any back-talk from you. I can't keep a vase in this house! What on earth made you let him get near it—you know he's too little to know . . . No! Don't touch it! Just get out of here while I clean up the pieces. You'd scatter them all over the house, I know you! Go on!"

The screen door opened, and Tina walked out. Her expression was impassive, but she started slightly when she saw them standing there. She paused for a second on the stoop, and then she skipped carelessly down the steps and started towards them, looking bored and slightly scornful once more. "My doll still can't come out," she volunteered. "She's still got the measles an' the doctor said she had to stay in. She's takin' lots of pills an' medicine, an' I don't know when she'll be able to come out."

The three little girls started across the yard together.





Curse Renewed

When oft' I see the shadow of thy face
And hear thy footsteps running through my dreams,
How warm the glow of After seems;
Thus picturing another time and place,
I dare thy scorn these memories to erase!
Though thine has altered much, my love still gleams
And from its hidden flame a faint light streams,
Enveloping thy taunts with quiet grace.

If, parting, you should turn and see my hand
Out-stretched across the chasm she has made,
Too late thy blinded soul may understand
One woman's love rejection could not fade.
I care not that she leads my own to Hell,
For good men come to buy

what I must sell.

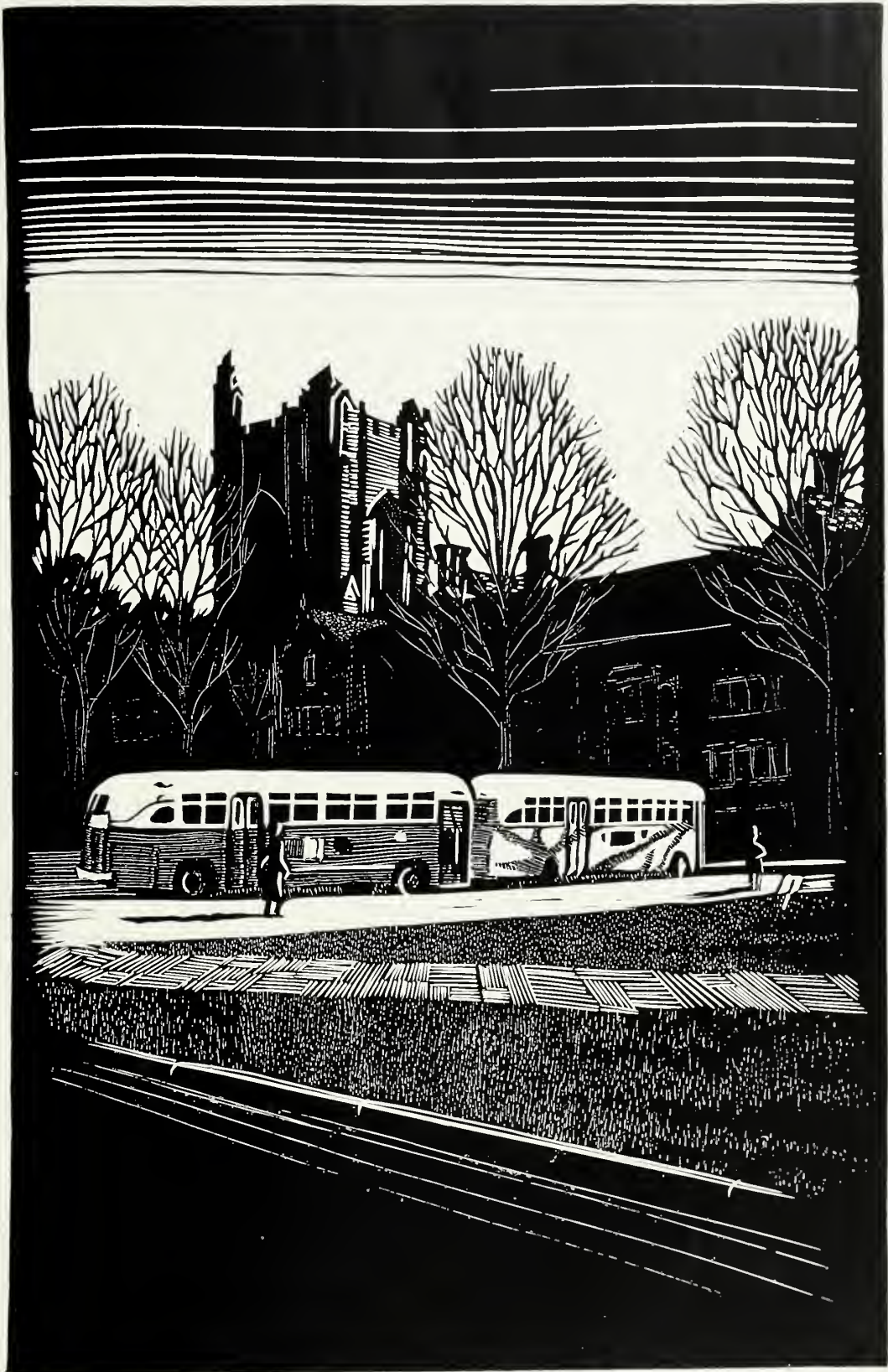
James Mullen

Winter

When crusted puddles muddeep crack
As winter feet shod hard, boot shod
Break, crush, and powertrack
A stubbled spoor of displaced sod,

The season hangs, drapes cloak and coats
With massive cold, condensing mood
Into a breath—which white mist floats—
Soul shadow, soundless, rude,
Offending sleep until it dissipates.





Peggy Payne

Almost


In the verge-land of almost
In the twilight
On the coast
At the birth of dark and bright
I am future's lonely host

I haunt the precipice of being
I am the spirit of seagull hover
I am the ghost of promised freeing
The tiny slip of wonted cover

The panic scrabble before the fleeing
The kiss that trembles before a touch
The panic blindness before the seeing
The very little before the much

I am the gate of an earthly fence
The stillest moment that links events





The Trilogy of the Pearls

I

Love is the cross that hangs between her breasts.
Full chaste.
Quiet and unrest.

II

A golden cross complements three pearls.
Her finger. Each ear.
Wisp-brown-hidden in curls.

III

Unknowing. Unknown. The reef-towering three lights.
Blind in a storm-fog.
Nor cross within sight.

Four Eyes & Me

by Ann Saalbach

Polly had a vision of dancing legs under a type of street light and with them went a lot of music and thousands of kinds of feet on a macadam pavement. They were Four Eyes' legs and she had conjured them up as part of the special photography that would be in her movie, from a scene somewhere in the middle. Then she would switch to the face and the laughing mouth, a can of Coke waving in the hand, and the camera would make the scene jerky, like you were dancing next to Four Eyes and the world was bouncing. But that was a picture of Four Eyes at 16.

(Four Eyes flew by, grew up into a blue-bearded life, but I remained immobile, frozen to the floorboards. Virgin.)

She wiped the counter again where the little cool pools of water from the outside of glasses formed and rubbed her bare foot against the gritty wooden floor. (Everything tries to get ugly, but fails even at that, with things sticking through the cracks. As we squinted in the sun and you laughed, rubbing my foot on the cement step was my only comfort . . . Everett us always happy except in letters.) She danced in place to the music which wasn't loud enough to lose yourself in and the people at the tables in the corner were all her friends, laughing, bearded, young, and deep inside, she hoped, terrified.

"There she is, that one there!" Preppy Face said, and she looked up quickly to see him swing down the steps into the dusky entry. She smiled a little, but instead of answering him it was a mask for her mouth. The rotating light shone blue and then green on his face slowly while he pushed his friend forward. "The little girl there in the NYU sweatshirt and

grubby jeans. She wan't talk to me though." He followed the other boy in and they sat at the bar.

Usually Polly would've turned her head and yelled, "TWO!" into the kitchen, but this time she turned around and walked into the kitchen herself. She still had the same smile and she thought it was stuck there. Maybe it would grow and grow until she had to tie it in a bow over her head. Then the ends would keep growing until they got to the floor and oozed out behind her, and she'd walk with it bundled in her arms. Mike was talking to the garbage man through the grating-like window. She could hear the cans clanking and the sound was comforting and the garbageman's voice came floating in from Mike's head level. She knew if she were standing where Mike was there would be a few grassblades right at the edge of the window. But she couldn't see anything because it was dark outside above them. "Two beers," she said to the colored kid, and Mike turned around.

"Polly," he said in his wonderful voice. She didn't stop smiling that way and she thought, holding her finger up straight before her and squinting, "Mike is only as tall as my finger. I could pick him up." She reached out to grab him between her thumb and first finger, but he was on the other side of the room.

Mike watched her, then laughed and walked past her, ruffling her hair. (Like chucking me under the chin. It's happening again. I can't touch anything.) She stood there, staring at the grating window which opened on the alley, on ground level. (Subterranean Homesick Blues . . . yeah but hey babe what do ya do if ya ain't got no home but yer homesick eh babe?) Mike came back and said, "Oh, it's the



Idiot again.” Polly nodded and said, “Where are his beers?”

“Here,” said the colored kid, smiling. He was new. “What idiot?” He would have really liked Polly, but she never talked much and he always had to pry things out of her and Mike, and then he felt like he was maybe trying too hard.

“Oh, a charming young man who comes straight from Prep school every Monday and Thursday to drink beer and admire Polly,” said Mike. “He’s mucho impressed with her because he thinks she very Beat.”

“I am beat,” said Polly. “I’m totally beat. I’m half dead in fact.”

“Hi Chris,” said Polly to Four Eyes when she walked into the dorm and Four Eyes was studying downstairs. “Where he hell have you been?” asked Four Eyes while she re-arranged her books and cast sideways glances at a boy who was waiting for his date. “Looking for the dry cleaner,” said Polly and almost started to cry. “For *two hours*?” said Four Eyes but kept on casting sideways smiles. Polly left and climbed the stairs and stopped on the second landing and thought about climbing out onto the fire escape but didn’t. When Four Eyes got tired of studying an hour later she came upstairs to their room, but Polly was almost through packing by then. All she took were her albums and some sweaters, jeans, and one dress. She closed the suitcase and climbed on the bed to take down the picture of the chinese junk that some boy had given to her when she was fifteen. “What the hell are you taking that down for?” said Four Eyes. Polly wouldn’t cry so she didn’t say anything. “You going away for the week-end?” said Four Eyes when she saw the suitcase. “Chris, I couldn’t find the damn dry cleaners,” said Polly. “I just kept wandering around the whole damn city and I asked about ten people where it was an they all said, ‘Oh, you’ve got a long way to walk!’ I had to cut history of art and math, and then I realized that I couldn’t find it because it was moving around while I was and that nothing ever stays still. Waking up in the same bed each morning is just coincidence.” Four Eyes stopped because Polly’s voice was hysterical. “Polly, what are you talking about?” “Well, anyway,” Polly went on, “I’m going to live down the Village and I’ll see ya around and all that.”)

Later on, after Preppy Face had carried on what would have been half of an inane conversation if Polly had answered him and then finally left, Polly sat on the stool and read a book of John’s. John came back then, she could tell because the rhythmic blue and green light stopped passing over the page when he stood his

bulk in front of it, and she heard the squeak of the swinging door.

“Hi ya Pol,” he said and some people looked up. There was laughing on the left and music on the right.

“Hi John,” she said and waved the book to show him she had it if he wanted it. Her toe was tapping out the music.

“Listen, I met that guy from the underground movies,” said John as he walked over to the bar. (Big Red, go Big Red John. He looks like a Santa Claus Christ. He looks like he’s lost in his eyes but he won’t bother to climb out because then he’d have to stop looking at you and thinking about you.) “He says he’s starting a new movie next week and if you want you can work on it. You know, some little menial task.” He smiled and so did she, this time for real.

“Oh that’s *great*,” she said.

“Hey,” he said, full of enthusiasm, leaning on the bar and looking at the window, “I was thinking of changing the name of this heap from John’s to Sgo.”

“Skoal?” said Polly, squinting in confusion.

“No,” he laughed. “Sgo, like an abbreviation of Let’s Go.” She looked at the backwards JOHN’S in the window and in the middle of the O she saw, across the street, the front door of a building. (I always used to stare out the o, when sitting here watching the movies in my head, forgetting sometimes and trying to put things in words again. Feet went by and lights filled up empty spaces. I should have been able to say many colored lights, but they’re only the same old colors . . . blue, green. Blah.)

“Sgo?” she said. “Sounds ok.” John stared out the window too for a minute and then said, “Mike,” very loudly and Mike appeared in the kitchen door and Polly thought, looking at the floor and not at Mike, If I jumped from up here to it down there, it would possibly take me three minutes to reach the bottom. I don’t really know I’m standing on it. I’m up here in my head, so far away. Of course it’s touchable. Of course I can reach it.

“Party tonight,” yelled Grandfather Uncle John. “Here, after closing time on until forever, upstairs in the apartment.” Pete stopped mixing drinks and gave a rebel yell and Ian, who had come in two hours later than usual and scared them all, said, “All right!” Everybody was laughing.

(Polly sat at the typewriter in the dorm and tried to write about what being 16 with Four Eyes had been like. But there was too much and it wouldn’t fit. Plus and minus signs are maybe forever, but words, words slide around a lot . . . put them on white paper and they die. Four Eyes ran in and flung her clothes off. “Date

with Jim in half hour," she yelled from her closet, out of breath. Polly nodded and smiled at the closet door, ignoring almost everything. Memories should die and then you can take them out and look at them like pressed flowers, then you can fit them places. But live ones don't stand still long enough and try to climb out your fingers and eyes, but can't. "How's your story coming?" said Four Eyes. "Should I wear my black and white skirt?" "It isn't," said Polly. "It doesn't go anywhere, it just sits there, all black and white and awful." "I guess that means you gave up on the red ribbon," said Four Eyes. Polly sat there thinking first. "I can't touch anything I really can't," and then, "Of course I can touch everything, I can touch anything."

That night she stopped on the stairs up to Mike's 2 rooms and wondered if he had told her to come get them or if he had said they would come get her. She stood there for a long time and wondered if he would think she was too eager if she went no matter what he'd said and the sound of somebody's typewriter came down the stairwell. (Pecking at his corrasable bond, Mike makes history in inky . . . floating down the damp well, his little bombs of tap bounce on me . . .) Then she finished climbing the stairs and kicked open the door.

"Ah come tuh git y'all," she said and convulsed Ian. Mike had already looked up from his corrasable bond novel by the time she looked at him, and he grinned for her.

"You know I really love wood. Old woody doors that sound really hollow as you kick open the room to Mike's door," said Polly.

"Party time! Party time!" said Ian and strutted around the room. "Ah say Polly, y'all'll git tuh meet the rest of thu ole crew who don't never git tuh come tuh ole John's while y'all are workin'."

"Right," said Polly and sat on the floor and waited for Mike to decide to leave.

"Ole Polly sure is a smart ole girl," screamed Ian and smirked into the mirror. "Leavin ole NYU and baggin thuh ole collitch scene, and joining us'n." Mike sighed and got up from his typewriter.

"Goes it baby?" said Polly.

"No," said Mike, in his wonderful voice. "I can't get anywhere right now." (I always started screaming when I couldn't write, but still calm, Mike silently scratches his eyes out from inside.) Polly tried to forget that it was happening to her again and pressed her fingers on the floor and thought, There, you're touching something.

"Let's go, let's go!" said Ian and took each of them by the arm and they ran down the stairs and out the

door. A coldish wind blew around them and New York was still there after all, in front of her, made up of thousands of little pieces. Piercingly clear everything looked outside, not fuzzy like inside, and the car horns were piercingly clear and the swish of wheels was softly clear. Ten thousand moveable breakable parts, she thought and looked at everything moving past as she raced with Ian and Mike through the people.

When they reached the door of the apartment Polly was afraid. "Mike, you won't leave me," she said, but he didn't hear her because Ian was opening the door. (Thank God you didn't hear me. Opening the door and walking in must be like being born or like going to bed. You physically and in one movement leave one thing for another.)

"Polly, hey everybody, this is Polly!" screamed Ian to the two rooms full of people. The ones nearby turned around and smiled and somebody screamed, "Rah Polly!" and then they all did. Polly knew some of them and she knew Big Daddy Jon would want to introduce her to the underground movie guy. (Four Eyes can't see me any more. I'm staring at a lamp made out of a milk bottle and everybody is screaming at me but though they are thousands, together they are one big mouth and therefore, Four Eyes can still outweigh them until they break up into parts again.) The music was finally loud enough for Polly because she was stuck in it and it filled the whole room. It might have been able to press everybody back against the walls and it might have been able to fill the spaces in between them so that they would be stuck in blocks, hanging where they were. It did fill her up and squeezed everything else out, so that when Santa Claus John loomed up and smiled at her with his gentle eyes, said, and pushed her to the corner where the underground movie guy was, protecting her by damming everything up with his big strong body, she smiled at him so she wouldn't have to talk and thought only about patting her hand on her thigh with the music. "This is Polly!" John yelled over the music, and Polly smiled, almost laughing, because of the music, dancing in place.

"Nest Thursday . . . 4th Street . . . not sure yet . . . come on over," she heard in between the other sounds that floated around. (Somebody said something a million years ago and I hear it now, all the lost sounds are growing in my head somewhere. One day I wake up and I'm 19, some other day I'll wake up and be 16 again. It's nighttime now, but that's coincidence. It could have been lunchtime, because time slides back and forth.) Mike walked by, straight through two rooms full of people without looking back at her, rubbing his hands on the seat of his jeans, and that left her staring

at him with her tongue between her teeth.

Later on, somewhere near 4, Mike came over and found her in the corner leaning her ear against the speaker of the record player. He asked was she drunk and she said maybe. She told him it wasn't that she was all played out, she just got a really good effect listening to really loud music, maybe it was psychedelic but she'd never know.

(Four Eyes came in and said, "When can't you get pregnant?" "I don't know," said Polly. Four Eyes came in again later and said, "How long is it between your period?" Polly said, "It's different for everybody, don't you even know?" "No," said Four Eyes and her mouth went all over her face like it always did. Polly studied some more, but suddenly all at once she felt air spread from her neck down and through her arms and legs and from her neck up and through her head and she put her face between her arms and she knew that Four Eyes had done it. The door opened and Four Eyes came in, so Polly lifted her head and watched Four Eyes take her contact lenses out, and Four Eyes was there in the air, contained within her body, wrapped up in her skin, entire and looking out from the inside. "I don't care if you tell me," thought Polly. "I care if you don't tell me," thought Polly.) Mike sat down next to her and didn't say anything but they sat together and looked at the world from the knees down, dancing or not, sitting, lying.

"Ian's really up," said Mike.

"Is that what they're doing in the kitchen?" said Polly.

"Yes," said Mike. (It's happening all over again.)

"Mike, ah ain't no more kin touch nothin," said Polly and she was living on the surface of her emotions. (If I fall down, it'll be like falling into a cellar of water and I'll have a hell of a time getting out without drowning.)

Mike ruffled her hair slowly and said, "I didn't smoke any because of you" in his wonderful voice.

"But you do sometimes," she muttered, and she hugged her ribs and bent forward onto her knees because her stomach suddenly hurt her. She wouldn't tell Mike that because she had to have something unshareable too.

"Why don't you?" he said finally. (His vowels dropped from his mouth like jewels.)

"To prove I don't have to," she said.

"Pol," he said slowly, but never upset and always calm, "what is it you think you're losing? Why did you leave school?"

Polly was listening to the music again and pretended that Mike hadn't really said that. "I got a letter from Everett again today," said Polly. (I ran



through the music again, but this time it ate me whole.)

"Everett: Proverbial Boy Back Home," said Mike and waited. Polly was about to stop talking because she was slipping beneath the surface of her emotions, which was dangerous and illegal. (It's like the blood all beating against the skin but controllable until you slit your wrists and then it won't stop even after you're sorry.)

"He just keeps begging me to come back to the land of the living and tells me I'm being stupid and throwing my life away and I'm a Babe in the Woods," she said. "He knows so much. He's always happy, happy jolly let the good times rolleth Everett who calleth me a moody bitch."

"Do you love him?" said Mike.

"Actually Everett doesn't exist," said Polly, carefully. "Not now. I know that. It's just these letters that happen to be in my mail box a lot. Each minute is isolated, not connected in cause and effect chains like I used to think and he's on the other side of something, there's Santa Clause Uncle Grandfather John between us these days. It would be like trying to cross time, I mean you can't touch what is gone, what you've left. It ain't no more there, it's like spirits trying to break through to physical worlds. Like when Alice went into the mirror, we just aren't the same species now."

"Are you writing poems in your mind again?" said Mike, after a while.

"Yes," said Polly and she silently sang the words of the song and across the room someone was throwing glasses at the wall and the invisible pieces slid downward silently. Somebody had matched the song and the world as sight and sound, but they didn't match. Ian walked through the door, tiny Ian and the tiny door at the end of the room, and his eyes were wide and a cigarette was in his fingers. Suddenly she remembered that beneath them was John's, the brick inside walls, the musty floorboards, and the bull fight poster in orange, dark and empty. So other things do exist but me up here, she thought. I don't know if that's true though. Mike looked at her, but he could only see a small part of her white face because the room was dark and her face was hidden by her hanging drapery hair.

"You have hanging drapery hair," he said. (If I lived inside your voice I'd be safe, given only in snatches, and treasured.)

"Sell-out, sell-out," she said. "I'm a virgin. You smoke pot though, I can't build walls around you." She pounded her fist on the floor until it hurt, but she did it even through Mike's next speech. (Four Eyes sent the Pepsi can flying down the block and they ran after it together screaming, conscious of the boys across the street once.)

"But Polly, do you want to build walls?" he said, and knelt to face her and her hammer fist, still calm but begging her to be all right again.

"No, no," she screamed. "Not walls, not walls. Just strings that can hold you together to someone, you can be free, but they keep you touching. We used to sit on her bed and talk about doing it or not doing it but Four Eyes did it, she grew up, she went to bed. I can't do it, I can't smoke it just to be able to touch you!" (That's it that's it, they take themselves away into little square places I don't see and will tell me about it when they come back but leave me alone in the meantime. I've failed again, eh babe? Don't know nothin'.) "That's it, that's it!"

"That's what?" said Mike. She had clasped her hands and was also kneeling, facing him. Nobody heard her screaming because of the music and their own voices around them, but Mike heard her.

"That's why I don't smoke it. I don't care about it, so if I did it would just be so I'd know everything everybody else did and I wouldn't be left out. But I can't sell out and touch you only on your terms, dammit dammit, got it got it got it?" She was hugging the speaker and staring at him without stopping once. They didn't move for long enough to realize it and the music was coming up from between her arms and filling things up. "It's my last weekend, dammit," she

said, and she would have thought she was going to cry but she knew she wouldn't cry. She put her head between her arms, and Mike said,

"What?"

"When I used to go to camp, I never like it much," she said, carefully. (I've done it now, I've let them all out and they won't go back in again. They're going to kill me because I cut the skin for them.) "I'd count the days till I could go home. We got there on a Saturday and we left 2 weeks later on a Saturday, and before the middle week-end was over it seemed like I'd never get home. When I'd look ahead to the day for leaving, there was that middle week-end blocking my view of it. But as soon as it was over, Monday morning, it would seem like I was leaving any minute, even though it was 5 more days, because nothing obscured my view, it was a straight fall till Saturday morning." (Four Eyes said, "I'm getting drunk when I'm seventeen" in the letters she wrote me every day.) "Going to bed is my last week-end," she said. "Then it'll be all up, I've already used everything else up and when I use that up, I'm there baby, free fall till death, straight road forever hey."

Mike couldn't say anything so he put his arms around her and the speaker and put his cheek on her head. His arms could have been a wall, but they could break too easily. (Mike is necessary but not permanent and permanent is necessary. I remain immobile, stung by sliding time . . .) Mike was putting wet kisses on her hair and she bit her own lip and pretended it was his. Then he let her go entirely, pushed aside the speaker, and held her again, closer, and said something, and when he kissed her she wanted to climb down his throat, his skin stopped her fingers from getting inside him. (I ask too much, I push too hard, but I need what I request.)

The sun wasn't coming up yet really but it was beginning to get gray in the sky. The music was behind her, loud and ugly, and people were being messy. She didn't care much even when she saw Protector Christ John lying down in the corner, and the smell from the kitchen was strange and she hid from it, and she thought, "So time isn't broken up into days. Things don't stop and begin again but go on forever without resting and suns merely rise and set." Mike pulled away a little and watched her and brushed her bangs down for her, his wonderful safe voice waiting till she asked for it. (Once I could touch things because I was standing on something, but now I'm like a bus rumbling on until the dawn, hung between the days ahead and the ones already gone.)

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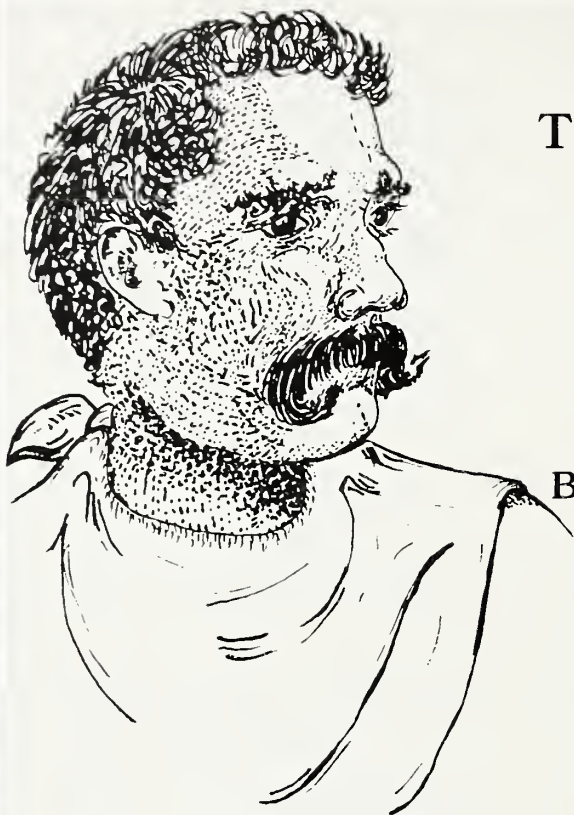
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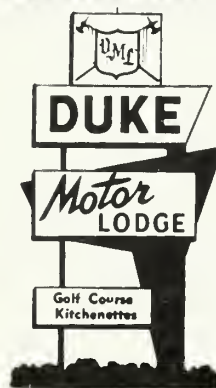
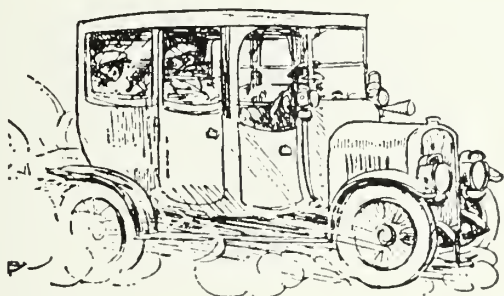
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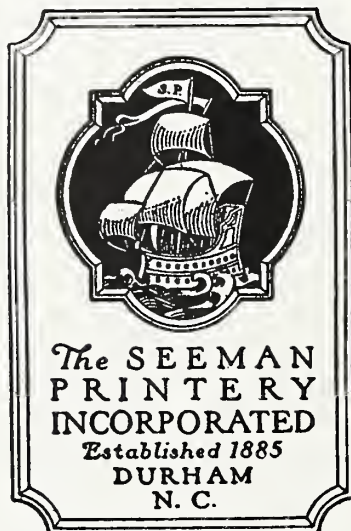
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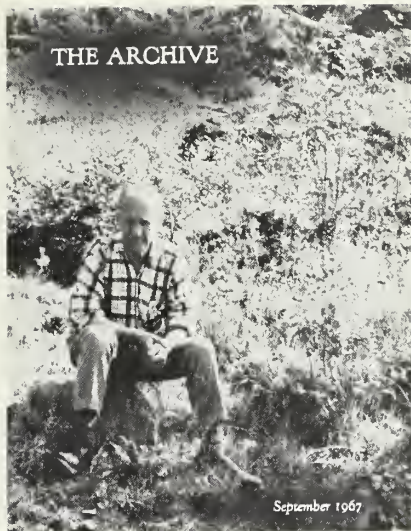


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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL 4

STORIES

Samsára 7

by Sean Devereux

Wind

or

A Piece, Perhaps from the Novel, or Perhaps for the Page
Which Charlie, the Wicked Editor, Who Ran Off to
Mexico, Left Blank 14

by R. Frederick Daugherty

Elizabeth 19

by Robert C. Johnson

Now a Very Long Time Ago 23

by Ann Saalbach

POEMS

Day Dry Slices of Crisp Unreality 16

by Hollis

A Letter 17

by Wendy Salinger

Poem 21

by Art McTighe

To Hammarskjöld 27

by Steve Garavelli

PHOTOGRAPHS

Cover: "If Miss Garbo Calls Tell Her I Can't Be Reached"

by R. Frederick Daugherty

"Tube" 7

by Bill Boyarsky

"Pain, Suffering, Agony And All That" 10

by R. Frederick Daugherty

"The Spot Where Charlie, The Wicked River Ran" 13

by R. Frederick Daugherty

"George" 18

by Paul Seder

"Flowers" 22

by Bill Boyarsky

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Editorial

This magazine is a product of a summer's itinerant labor. I expected a great influx of material both art work and fiction, but was greatly reoriented when it became apparent that the majority of the good student creative artists were unwilling to send in the creations of their minds and hands; hiding against exploitation, afraid of editorial whimsy, certainly viewing the *Archive* as a foreign outlet. So finally, there were the inevitable letters and pleas and all the last minute scurrying and patching—the last whipping, impatient dash to the printer; too careful to misplace anything, yet consumed by the irrational onrush of darkening thoughts and the fears that I had forgotten all the poetry or that everything would come back printed upside down. But that is over now.

The year has begun and with it not only the characteristic internal magazine problems, but the surprising and unfortunate frustrations and defeats at the hands of school administrators who seem content to systematically mete out their bureaucratic gradations of impartial irrelevance. We have always sought and received much help from the administration and its peripheral agencies, but I suppose it is indicative of the position of creative arts on this campus when the editor of the only medium for the exposition of these arts is refused an interview with the University president because he is not seeing anyone. And there is not only the idea of being turned away because of inconvenience, but just the difficulty with the simple, necessary things of needing a little help in sending out letters or trying to get money for speakers (not just the starving, young Greenwich Village poets, but accepted acknowledged artists) and it all seems like a large patchwork with everyman one square or a game of button, button, who's got the goddamn button.

I had wanted to conduct campaigns, to wage wars. Unlimited parietal hours and the academic integrity of an immature institution where a part of the almost infinite spectrum of rational, honest answers and means toward educational stabilization. So many times, in sophomoric mind bendings and even in older, more straightened plottings, the solutions seemed ready to be aptly dispensed with unwavering justice and merciless invective. And then, of course, the whole *Archive* world slid in or maybe I just fell and picking myself up out of the two year old stack of boxes, exchange magazines and vintage yellow-edge-curved prints, suddenly realized that everything really was as if seen through 3-D glasses pushed half way down my nose and the fuzziness and red lines were mine for a year. And sure-



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ly, it has been an optimistic hope that with a pincering imagination and an undying will for truth, the battle for a five cent glass of tea could be won in bi-monthly installments.

I suppose every editor on finding himself at last the final and often sole judge of this myriad of printed material is ready, at a word, to scrap the whole magazine, to throw it all out, to build again with his own office and his own staff and his own work. There are the ideas for better stories, new poems by published authors, more pages, four times as many literary speakers, all in the wonderful, beautiful world of the new year. But then, for the first time, as the printing deadline draws near, good ideas are not quite enough and an actual magazine must be put out, and maybe it is just the annual *Archive* outright mechanical ineptitude or maybe I should have known really, as when I contemplated enjoying the celebration of our 80th anniversary literary festival only to remember that we had celebrated it last year, our 79th, that any editor had a lot to fight, not only in his school or his office, but within his own self-styled artists's lack of ability to put things together. And certainly there should be no apologies for that, not because they are not warranted, but because the work would be done, regardless of the confusion and disappointment and because there should always be the understanding and knowledge that the most complete and probably only real value in life is in the possibility of continuous growth and that muddling through and stepping wrong and stepping right are all the good parts and if, through some, special luck or lucky talent, extra good things can be done then that is certainly fine, but certainly just a part.

So the year begins with the promises and the hopes and too, the memories, that give some idea of what is to come. And I am reminded of an old train station and the feelings and emotions that are somehow a part of this year. . . .

A slamming door and over melting chunks of dirty ice, on glistening though forever shaded street where elevated trains like herds of buffalo grumble straining overhead, through doors of glass folding inward I walked toward the waiting train. Carrying a blue coat box in one hand, a paper bag in the other, I passed people never seen and shifting hands wiped an invisible mist from my hair. With pocketed ticket I continued toward the crowded gateway and the blue suited information man cowering in his cage with timetables and waving hands. And then out again into the night between gray faced men reading bright posters in a frosted light. I watched and breathed—the smell of the trains, the light reflecting off a far away slate roof, and the power poles, like spindly trees, black against the old stone buildings. A cold breeze carrying with it the taste of Boston's cars and factories, blew in from the dark tracks, beyond the lamps and waiting trains. I could see the steam rising from the train ahead of me, with a sighing hiss like remembered age. The misting rain made rainbow halos around each light, and their muted glare reflected dinner off the dampened concrete.

Halfway between my train and the station I saw a woman walking almost straight toward me. Her face looked as gray as her dirty coat and she walked slow with a limp and cane. Her hair, severely tied tight on top of her head, shone dully above a wrinkled forehead. On her face was a printed smile which seemed to grow a shade wider as she went by. As we separated she sniffed the night air once, and I could hear the dwindling rubber beat of her cane in the frozen fog; but she was soon out of hearing and as I thought as I sat in my plastic seat watching for faces through windows reflecting only my own, out of mind as well. (Thanks for this to persons unnamed.)

There are many things to do, and finally here since Heidi said I would (and she seems to know me as well as anyone) I will Welcome The Freshmen.



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Saṃsāra

"Saṃsāra: round of birth and death, . . . round of coming to be and passing away . . . conditioned by the fruit of one's works. . . . Save me from it, I pray thee: in this round of existence I am like a frog in a well without issue."

Maitri Upanishad.

August 23, 1966.

5:16 A.M.

Time-in-abeyance. But returning, inexorably, irreversibly. And I must immerse myself in the day. I have wakened before the alarm, before it was scheduled to begin again, and cannot sleep, knowing that it comes. Nothing worse than waiting for the insidious buzz. Fourteen minutes. Six inch circumference on the clock face. Their reality is eighty-four inches away, riding toward me—inexorably, irreversibly—on the tip of the second hand, at 1/176 miles per hour.

I am. For fourteen minutes, I am. Nothing else. In fourteen minutes (now twelve), I become, commit the first act—which calls, immutably, for another, and that for a third. Facing, as they do, that approach, these minutes apart are charged with a vague anxiety; a remote visceral writhing

protests. If only the alarm had rung and I had made the transition from dream-illusion (to what?) without this conscious interval. Hurry General Electric overseer-of-our-lives, place me back into history. Let the dullness re-descend.

6:50 A.M.

Again a hiatus in the flow, but unshared; the others wait, talking, finishing breakfast, vending machine wholesome. Among them, I watch, unwatched, unacknowledged, morning grow in the shipyard, and though unacknowledged, feel, for my awareness, that the part is more than the whole and that, in my anonymity, I share a secret with an Awareness that they will never approach. Uncommitted, I observe: The eleven-to-seven shift slinks to the gangways, anticipating the whistle which is the only demarcation between their labor and ours; the haze-curtain is lifted off of the river, revealing more dry docks, machine shops and cranes on the other shore. I will remember the cranes (From the bridge where U.S. 17 crosses the river on the way to the beach, I see them and point them out to a carload of friends). The cranes, the



arms of the yard, reach out and minister to the ships, running between dry docks with their sixty-foot steel legs locked to rails, their cabs, (larger than many of the worker's claboard shacks, their homes), sitting seventy feet in the air, their booms extending another sixty feet. From the slum, the spreading blanket of Negro hovels, hemmed at the river's edge by a street of bars, pawn shops and bail bond establishments, the cranes can be seen, rising above the trees—lest the dark organism that is the slum forget its symbiotic pact with the yard.

I had watched one lift a panel truck up onto the deck of a ship and thought them omnipotent, and, weeks later, the same omnipotence had hung, poised, contesting with the density of a ship's propeller, and toppled into the yard. The man in the cab was killed. I didn't know him. He was merely a death. Violent and near. And I brandish its violence and nearness (On the bridge where U.S. 17 crosses the river on the way to the beach: "No, it isn't that dangerous. Some guy was killed there the other day, but. . .").

And the ships themselves, the rust-lepers which hulked over the yard and brooded, intolerant of the meanness of the land. And I, who had known only the land, was reverant. At first.

I came to the yard, laden with Joseph Conrad, with Conrad's sea and Conrad's ships. Caught up in *Lord Jim*, at a drive-in movie—I am the progeny, yes, of mass media, but not regretful here, no, because Conrad's sea and Conrad's ships should be seen—I had been oblivious to my date for a time (ironic, as the choice of movies had been tangential to the fact of a drive-in theater). I had taken her home, wet-eyed over Jim's death not because she knew, but because Peter O'Toole had bled, had rendered a perfunctory approval of her companionship and had delivered myself to Conrad's words, finishing the book—which had always been there, but which I had never bothered to read—before morning. Then *Nostramo*, *Nigger of the Narcissus*, "Heart of Darkness," "Youth." Even with all of Conrad's pessimism, I recognized Jim's tragic nobility and in the yard, saw myself, Jim, emerging, purified, tempered, enobled by the suffering, the idignity, the sweat-toil and filth. Bloody but unbowed and all that. I still marched to the proud iambic singsong of Kipling's "If," which hung—probably still does—on the wall of our locker room, and, here, grappling with adversity will come to know the meaning of it all. I, a primitivist, thought to find a simplification, a least common denominator—my once well-ordered, goal-oriented, Kipling-simple existence had been roiled by a year of college—in the shipyard, laboring side by sweating side with humanity. And mine is the self-conscious generation: to know is not

to feel; we are taught, we learn, but we must feel. So I left the sterility and came to feel. Honestly. I went to the yard because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach. . .

And I want Jim's nobility. And/or his tragedy.

The compressor surges. Always and ever the systolic throb of the compressor.

7:00 A.M. The whistle blows.

9:00 A.M.

I sit in a metal lifeboat, up on blocks in the center of the yard. Incongruency: lifeboat floating on a sea of oil-splashed concrete. Indicative.

Straining physically—the good tensions of pulling, . . . lifting, pounding, and the blank sleep afterward—I seek . . . to avoid my mind. The connotations of "common labor" spoke to my condition, a condition arrived at after a year in a college community, whose inhabitants cultivated blue-denim work shirts and offered folk paeans at the altar of the proletariat. Then, an extoller of "labor" in the abstract, a vicarious common man; now, I squat in the bilge of the boat with two representatives of that same working class, who are unaware that Eugene Debs ever lived and thought, and are only crudely familiar with the concept of a labor union. They had never stopped (halted, paused, ceased, been released) to think about it. My mission. Maybe later, kid. This ship's gotta leave the yard by the twenty-ninth. Sculley says we're behind now. Maybe after that we'll have a meeting or something. No time, now.

With a Conrad-colored vision yet remaining, I am distressed by the lack of anything maritime.

(The yard is only ten miles upriver from the sea.)
"Are the dogs running tonight?"

(Even this far up, the river rises and falls about three feet a day with the tide, flooding the cypress and mangrove lowlands, replenishing the sawgrass praries, making islands out of the hammocks on which the shrimp fishermen live.)

"How can you afford the track with them alimony and support payments?"

(This river port is the largest on the east coast south of Norfolk; the few words painted on the sterns speak volumes: "Puerta La Cruz," "Göteborg," "Liverpool," "Rio de Janeiro,")

(I ask directions of a welder, a former employee of the Hardy Sheet Metal Co.)

"Right over there where that boat is parked."

"Those guys at the pulp mill are gettin' two-seventy, and plenty of overtime."

(The ship, with this lifeboat in its davits, will leave its oily river berth, move down river past Mayport,

where the Atlantic absorbs the river, between the jetties—long backbones of granite, railroaded there from the mountains, put in place by men, the same dusky bondsman race that lifted the pyramids above the desert, and intruding nearly a mile into the sea (and, yes, I have stood on the furthest Appalachian boulder of them, and watched.)—glide over the snapper banks, through the scattered shrimper fleet, and on to where the shelf drops off and the long scimitar of coastline can no longer be seen.)

“When we get done with this, we got to paint them lifeboat davids on the *Moksha*.”

And I, working beside them, listening to them, forget. We put in our eight hours a day, five days a week (sometimes, twelve hours, seven days, and they welcome the time. Overtime, time and a half) in a floating warehouse, a factory, worse: warehouses and factories have windows; a cargo hold is dank and airless. Welcome aboard the *Patna*, Jim.

But, once and again, the wonder and hunger return, for a time: standing on the bow, looking out over the river, away from the bar-lined street and the disease beyond, pulling myself up into the crow’s nest of a tanker (I had had to do that: the sight of the lookout had been disquieting until I had been there and pleasing afterward). Again, as I worked on the bridge, removing paint from portholes with MEK (methyl ethyl ketone, which takes the skin from your hands and brings on strange visions when breathed in close quarters), I stood at the ship’s wheel for a moment, legs spread and braced. I turned slowly the pages of the log: “August 9, Abeam Cape Hatteras light, squall rose 0900, swells down by dusk.” An obscene order from the foreman, a Cro-Magnon, delivered (maybe) from a life of gas station attendance through some nepotistic dealings with the front office. And since I cannot pause, since the reverie was taken from me, I pulled down hard on the disconnected wheel and left it spinning, and spinning.

Now, I chip paint in the lifeboat oven and repress Conrad. I am learning the code: mark time, make an easy job last, finish an ugly one quickly and without care. For a while, at the first, I was conscientious, but in a forward hold, fourth level, they had circled me and explained, curtly. They thought I had been hired as a speed-up. I listened. The pace quickens only at the foreman’s approach. We are paid by the hour. Mark time, men. Survive for eight more.

The sweat runs down my chest, adding to the delta of grime building up at my beltline. Above us on the thwart, the hard hats of my co-workers lay. A biography, the hard hat: our crew wears yellow, to be recognized—stigmatized—as members of the labor pool,

the unskilled. Workers expend much energy trying to individualize their helmets, with drawings and insignias. One of the hats on the thwart is fairly bright still and has “Herbert” scrawled across the front in clumsy block letters. The other, the old man’s shows no yellow, is paint smeared, battered, with the name long ago blotted out. The condition of a man’s helmet tells how long he has worked in the yard and at what. Labor pool helmets lose their names and drawings after about two weeks. The foreman who gave me the job, a friend of the family, has promised to have my hard hat cleaned and the name put back on when I leave. A souvenir. I will keep it in the closet with my blue-denim work shirts.

My crowd is big on hard hats this summer. Democratic principle. We leave them in the back seats of our cars—sometimes foreign sports cars—when we date. Common man. There is a rugged-looking (but clean cut), sun bronzed, young engineer in the Marlboro adds. Wearing a helmet.

My scraping is awkward and jerky; I’m off balance, cramped; knuckles are bleeding and covered with sandblast grit. A lifeboat of galvanized sheet metal. No shade. Here I am in a solar energy disc. Every pore is open, pouring sweat, and soaking up soot from the walls of the engine compartment; too hot for the helmet; my head comes up sharply under the thwart. No room to move, so I just squirm with the pain and curse. With head and shoulders wedged in the engine compartment, I scrape grease from the crankshaft. My glasses are knocked awry—a vaguely emasculating feeling having them hang hooked over one ear like this. With a smooth, powerful stroke, Herbert draws long scrolls of paint off of the metal and watches the ladder leaning against the gunwale. A movement there will signal the foreman’s approach.

The old man, who apparently enjoys grovelling intimately with an oily diesel, grins,

“You gittin’ it?”

I ignore him. He—according to yard gossip, a coal miner until three years ago, and the father of twelve children—begins to hum and chatter to himself. He, whose paycheck in the coal fields had never approached the minimum wage, finds it difficult to believe that a man can earn fourteen dollars a day and is satisfied. For now. Maybe it’s all relative. Maybe that’s it.

“I’d be in the Navy if I had this one.”, Herbert trespasses upon my stoic withdrawal, pointing at what, I assume, is a glass eye (different color than the other one). Herbert is staring, resenting my silence. Pure speculation, but his existence so lacks complexity that I feel I can circumscribe it with generalization, pigeon-hole it: the loss of his left eye prevents the draft board

from entering his life and rescuing him. He is groping, handicapped with a somewhat deficient cerebral cortex (Due to his ability to maul the opposition's ball carrier, he was probably led through the academic labyrinth as long as his eligibility had lasted. Then abandoned to the shipyard.) for answers to questions the nature of which he only dimly understands. He breaks into the old man's ribald anecdote,

"How long have you worked here?"

The old man looks at him, but brings the debaucher of the farmer's daughter to his just and vulgar deserts, before answering,

"Three years all told. Two years not countin' times I'se laid off."

Lay-off: a period of weeks (once, months) when his family had subsisted on mustard greens; he on supermarket sherry. Once he had even strained sterno and drunk that, like the niggers do (only nine cents a can, even though the slum grocer marked it up, because he knew it would sell anyway). But his pride wouldn't let him do that again. A man has to draw the line somewhere.

"Yea."

From my omniscient vantage point. I watch Herbert. He seems relieved that the old man's condition hasn't resulted solely from his association with the shipyard.

"What do they do for ya when ya retire?"

I am surprised, but I suppose he has been conditioned to ask that question by the want adds (mass culture, again): "Good starting pay, plenty of opportunity for advancement, retirement benefits, etc."

The old man laughs. I sense an unaccustomed air of superiority.

"Nobody ree-tires around here. You work 'til you can't stand up no more."

"Until you kiss off.", I interject. Then feel like a fool for trying to be accepted by them, for descending into their world.

"Yea, 'til you kiss off. They don't give nothin'. If you was to die right now, they'd punch out yore card, before they even moved the body."

The old man puts out a barrage of idiot laughter. Silent, Herbert stares off. Just off.

I grin at the old man. Stupid thing to do. I've heard that time clock thing thirty billion times. I retreat, reassume my silent sufferer *persona*, ponder. I must guard my identity better or it will get away from me. Remember: You are a sensitive poet-type, aloof, seeing all, and knowing. Pleasing irony that your genius goes unrecognized here (Yes, I am pleased that they

think I am one of them. That I can compete and win on their terms. And then leave). But you rise above it, knowing. Untouched by it. And unaffected. (What of this morning, while I waited for the clock and knew I was closed in, trapped.) Nothing. You were just tired, and didn't want to get up. That's all. Nothing more. You are a free agent, here because you choose to be. Remember.

Consider the time clock. The time clock never stops—three shifts, overlap, not a minute lost. Time is of the essence. Twice a day they pay homage to the time clock, to the cycle. The lives are printed up on IBM cards: name, age, description, address (a man is delineated in time and space.). Twice a day, they submit themselves to the clock for its

approval. Do not bend, fold, spindle or otherwise mutilate your identity. They are the ones who are tied to the minute hand, the same minute hand, and sweep around, and around.

"I'm not working here long. I'm just staying until I get enough money to go to junior college."

It's hot. I feel small. I laugh. Herbert grabs my wrist; his fingers easily touching his thumb on the other side. Hesitates (his thought processes are rather easily sidetracked.),



"My girl has bigger wrists than that."

I consider commenting on his girl. Reject the idea. Too dangerous. A sense of humor requires cerebral cortex. I take his arm and try to jerk my wrist free. He leers and releases it. The sun, the grime, my powerlessness, that mesomorphic enfant. I want more than anything to backhand him in the face with the paint scraper. Suicidal. I turn away, notice the word "Provisions" stencilled on a locker, and am reassured: neither of them would notice the error in a thousand years. Maintain your self-image. Stay above it. I try to scrape through the bottom of the boat.

11:25 A.M.

The beat of the compressor is eclipsed for a moment by the lunch whistle. Only eclipsed.

The decks of the ships spill over; men stream down the gangways; all of the tributaries conflux in the yard.

I sit on the bulkhead eating a sandwich. The river is glassed over; no wind, smoke from the freighter across the river rises straight up; a rainbow-cirle, where paint has been thrown in the river, expands. The oily opalescence on the surface, throws back the suns rays, destroys the cool, deep look of the water; brown hyacinths and a rotting mullet float in the froth washed in against the bulkhead. The Port Authority rhetorics about "restoring the river to its former pellucid and untainted state"; the owner of the yard, representing three tons of raw waste per month, is vice-chairman of the Authority. I throw my sandwich paper in the water. What the hell. They say we resist all authority. Yea, I guess so.

I take off my shirt and lie here, encased in a mold of sun heat. Shows how little they know or care about it. The river never has been clear. Not even when the Timiquans lived here (I wonder what MEK would do to a cypress dugout.). It has always been colored by the tannic acid from the cypress roots. As far upstream as Welaka (and, yes, I have followed the river to its source) it is that same brown; even in a glass, it looks like weak tea. No froth upriver, though, or strangled mullet. And the spring-fed tributaries, the Oklawaha, the Withalacoochee, the Santa Fe, Silver River are clean and cold. Where the river narrows near Palatka, the hyacinth drifts sometimes reach from one shore to the other. Bass heaven.

"Kid."

I turn around, hoping he will notice the resentment, "I want you and Johnson gettin' them tanks this afternoon."

I thought that was coming. The old man must have told Sculley that there is something between Herbert and me, so he matches us up one on one in the tanks. They do things like that around here. I'm not afraid

of him up in the yard, but painting the tanks requires cooperation. Herbert acts without thinking. Like a little kid. 11:55 A.M. The Whistle. The sandwich paper has drifted downriver with the tide, toward Mayport.

12:05 P.M.

I check out an outfit from the surly attendant at the tool shack. I have to elbow my way through a crowd of riggers waiting in line. Stop and roll my sleeves up a little further. The rig includes air hose, mask, paint pot and spray gun. All the power tools in the yard are pneumatic; the compressor ashore feeds through pipes into distributors up on deck; a hose runs from the distributor valve to the pressure cooker-like paint pot, to which is attached the spray gun. Sustaining the whole system, the arterial web of pipelines and hoses, is the pulsing compressor. Its unceasing throb can be heard even below decks, out on the ships.

The tanks are the lowest level in a freighter, below the cargo holds. They are usually filled with fuel or ballast water. In the bottom hold, three men lift the hatch cover and tell of a painter who was left down there. The hatch was replaced, sealed. He must have nearly broken his back before the crew unaware, hearing nothing, flooded the tanks. God, I hope they filled quickly for him. I don't want to go down there.

The cover is off. I won't be the first down; I must be nearest the hatch once we're down there. Herbert stares dully. I tell them I have forgotten to open the valve. When I return, Herbert is already down (good) stringing lights. I descend, fighting myself; go back up and drag the hatch cover farther from the opening; and go back down. Damn Sculley and the old man. The floor and walls are slippery; no room to stand. We have to get the oil off of the walls with rags and brushes, so that the paint will stick. Below the decks of the *Patna*, Jim had his vision: he saw the weakened seams bursting in the storm and the sea forcing its way through the hull, through man's bulwark. In his moment of truth, he fled the sea, because he feared the purposeless ebb, flow of it, and the indifferent chaos of it.

Herbert glares at my thoughts. Time is of the essence. The river must run beneath the ship, the *Moksha* out of some Far Eastern port. No. I forgot. The ship is up on drydock, suspended above the flow.

We paint. My art will be on display all up and down the coast of Europe. For anyone who cares to clamber down into the bowels of this ship. An apt term: I expect to be purged from this dark tube by a peristaltic contraction; steel walls will unlulate suddenly and discharge us from the *Moksha*.

A fog of paint hangs in the air, visible in the dim light. I'm breathing that. My mask, which is connected

to the air hose, leaks and the air tastes brassy, rubbery. I feel paint particles showering the hair on the back of my neck. A diagonal pathway of paint into each nostril is laid down by my breathing. I try to control my breathing, take in less paint; keep thinking about clogged bronchia; have always been proud of my wind—fifty yards under water on a single breath. I cough and spit.

"Hey, Herbie, you know that the life expectancy of a commercial painter is five years less than that of a normal individual."

My voice is muffled by the mask. Weird acoustics in the tanks.

"Hunh?"

"House painters die five years early."

"I ain't no house painter."

"You're right. House painters work outdoors."

Trying to absorb the paint, the mucus in my throat and nose thickens. I keep spraying in long up and down swaths. Rhythmic. Lulls me, satisfies my motor impulses. Rhythm is a narcotic. The opiate of the people.

"How much does college cost?"

How does he know that I go to college? I evade him, "I don't know. My folks pay it."

"I can go to electronics school in the Navy. Electronics pays good."

"What about your eyes?"

"My brother-in-law makes three sixty-five an hour as a welder. Drives a four twenty-seven Chevy."

"Learn how to paint, Herb. House painters work up on ladders, up on roofs, where there is air and trees and sun. But five years isn't all that long. If you wear your mask all the time, it might be less than that."

In the same article, I read that radiologists, with their M.D.'s, have a life expectancy shortened by six years. Maybe the same principles hold, clear across the spectrum. I relent and want to tell Herbert, but can't see explaining what a radiologist it. Let it go.

"Don't you get tired, paintin' with them skinny arms?"

O.K., Herbert. Knowing its beneath me, forgetting my vow to stay in control, surrendering my detachment, seeing only my thinness, and despising it because it is given, immutable.

"Herbert, if you stay here, how long do you figure it will take you to make leaderman?"

"I dunno. I got changed from painters helper to third class painter after a month."

"B.S. You're still in the labor pool."

"Hell, I am."

"You can't be third class with one eye."

I don't know that, but I'm testing him, searching for vulnerability.

"They don't know nothin' about my eye at the office."

"Wrong again. Check your card over when you punch out tonight, wizard. 'Herbert Johnson, male, age: 19, height: 6'1", weight: 216, hair: blond, eyes: grey, physical disabilities: vision totally impaired in left eye.' You're programmed."

"I'm six-two."

"I'm glad you recognized the necessity for accuracy. Six feet two inches is a good specific, constant figure. They don't want any variables on your card."

The claustrophobic tremor is there again. I squeeze the paint gun. Ashore the compressor contracts. Paint jets out on a stream of air. The air molecules are drawn into the compressor at the other end, are coursed through the pipes and hoses. Each molecule is locked in place, its movement contingent upon the action of the others, but always forward toward the nozzle which will explode it back into space.

Boyle's and Charles' Laws: raise the heat and the pressure increases; more molecules, more heat, more pressure. Conversely proportional, inversely proportional. There is a constant involved, of course. It's a closed system.

I see. And I know that it is the same for me as it is for Herbert and the old man, when you reduce the whole thing to lowest terms. Keep spraying. Involved, you'll forget. No. That I fear most of all. But you must participate, that's all there is, anyway.

I have to get out of here. To think.

I'm out of the tank, up the ladder, out on deck. The riggers and welders look up: I'm out of place, out of time. I walk to the rail. A leaderman looks down from the bridge, wonders why a yellow helmet is on deck, starts toward me. Forward, I can see the river eddy around the edge of the drydock.

"Hey, kid, are you painters finished with the holds yet?"

I look off downriver, toward the bridge, toward town, where the office buildings line the shore. Doctors, lawyers, insurance salesmen, switchboard operators, executives, janitors, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. All committed.

I wanted Herbert to come up first; I tried to make him come up. Sculley will find him still down there, painting alone and will remember that it was Herbert who remained, when we, Herbert and I, were paired one on one in the tanks. Herbert will become a third class painter. It's not that bad, really, if he never stops to think about it.

"We can't lay them cargo frames back in, until you guys finish down there. You painters are holding up the works. According to the schedule, we should be finished these holds by Friday. Where are you goin'?"

I want to answer cryptically. As I abandon my *Patna*, I want to tell him that Jim had honor, fear, cowardice to struggle with, and tragedy (mix two parts pity and terror with one part *hubris*). I went to the yard because I wished to live deliberately to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach: quiet desperation.

"We need some MEK."

Am I to commit myself, now? Methyl ethyl ketone, grease, rust, wire hawser, steel cargo boom, grinding winches. Then: spars, planks, sailcloth, woodshavings, tarred rigging. (Yea, but sailors died of scurvy. No citrus fruit. Mail was two months in coming from England. Wooden ships founder easily.) I know, I understand, I real-ize, except listen to nail ring as it is driven into a plank or the firm satisfaction of a mallet against oak. Steel against steel, the background music of our existence: the vibrations must go somewhere (Law of Conservation of Matter and Energy). We absorb the sound waves, store them up. And the resonance strains within us for release. (You don't want to go *backwards*. The infant mortality rate in 1856 was. . .) It's not that really. Only, metal shavings don't even smell. At all. But the river smells.

"Well, hurry. You clowns are holding us up. Tell Sculley to get on the stick. Those holds have to be sealed day after tomorrow."

And if they aren't What if it all ceased. What if the heart stopped beating. Do I dare disturb the Universe? (You can't stop it. The compressor runs all the pneumatic tools, which build the ships, which carry trade to the ports of the world in trade, which maintains our national economy, which lies behind our unparalleled standard of living, which is why we're so happy.)

So I leave the ship and walk into the yard and the

pigeons—having no ambition to wheel aloft—peck at the sandblasters' sand. An hour left before the quitting whistle, a hole in time.

The whole yard is staring at me, because I am not working, not working with a deadline to meet. I've discovered the key to it all: its a game and every human being takes a turn at being "it" and he doesn't know when its his turn. Everyone else knows. Now, I'm "it." Soon all of them will pour off of the ships, laughing and patting me on the back and welcoming me. Because of the game, and my being it and all, that's why they're staring. They don't really believe all that deadline stuff.

The *Moksha* is being lowered back into the water; the dry dock crew opens valves and it pervades. The dock sinks, restoring the *Moksha* to the river, as it should be, I suppose. There is a silent cacophony about a ship in dry dock. I feel better with the anomaly resolved.

11:42 P.M.

And I am telling her, trying to make her see and share it with me. The river, my archetypal river: Upstream, past Welaka even (where there is no froth or rotting mullet) the infant flux comes forth out of deep limestone gorges, rises northward, through hyacinth and cypress, on—inexorably, irreversibly—into the foulness, and surrenders to the sea at Mayport. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. She is nodding in empty agreement. And I see, and hope for the ecstasy of communication withers. The turgescence subsides, leaving us hollow, shivering in the breeze from the river. And she, trying to bring it back, turns, "What is it again that the Indians called the river?"

"Lethe."



Wind

or

A Piece, Perhaps from the Novel, or Perhaps for the Page Which Charlie, the
Wicked Editor, Who Ran Off to Mexico, Left Blank

The hurricane had come in the early morning black of two A.M., a little later than the Zenith had said it would, but my brother and I had stayed up to watch it anyway, not from the boat, or even from the docks, but from the screened-in back porch of Uncle Herschel's house. Uncle Herschel thought it was too dangerous near the water. And he had been responsible for us, or me anyway, being eleven, and ten years younger than my brother, since our parents had been killed.

The wind had whipped the tall pine trees behind the house back and forth against the ground, as if they had been only tiny ferns. Limbs cracked suddenly, sharply, out of sight, high in the tops, where the flood-lamp which shone from the porch onto the backyard did not reach. They fell heavily on the ground, tearing loose chunks of grass and earth; then bouncing, they were caught again by the wind and blown, needles and smaller branches flying loose, away, out of the yellow circle of light, and into the dark where we could not see. Only the lightning which exploded quickly, not in long bolts, but in small intense flashes which were caught and held motionless for an instant in thousands of tiny raindrop sparks, lit the night beyond.

We had seen it all; my brother worried about the boat, but all I thought of was the sudden frightening beauty of the storm. And in the morning, after the false calm of the eye and the equally fierce but opposite winds of the other side of the hurricane, we rode down to the river in Uncle Herschel's car. Uncle Herschel didn't like my brother's motorcycle, and wouldn't let him keep it at the house. And when we got to the docks, the boat where my brother and I had lived with our parents only three months ago, and where my brother promised we would live again as soon as the court made him my guardian, lay sinking in the channel.

I stood beside the gasoline pump at the end of the

dock. A blue iridescent film spread out over the choppy water from the leaking pipe beneath me. Clear unleaded Amoco cast itself uselessly on the water. Before me, far beyond the oily slick, my brother struggled to keep the frail green canoe from overturning in the dark grey water. Only thirty feet or less of the big sailboat's white hull was still visible as I saw him board her and disappear below the deck. The stern of the boat began to slip beneath the water.

"She'll take him with her like a jealous woman if he isn't quick about it."

I turned and looked at Mr. Graham, the dockyard owner. He leaned on his crutch and stared out over the river. "He's no time for long farewells."

The stern was awash now. A thrill of fear made my legs shiver as I looked down again at the circle of gasoline slick. My brother came back out on deck, and climbed into the rocking canoe. The boat's cabin, already streaked with black oil from where the waves had broken over it, began to sink slowly. My brother paddled away quickly. I could see his wet pants and thick matted black hair. The boat sluggishly righted herself until only the maststump and the foredeck showed. Then they too, disappeared.

When he was less than five feet out, Mr. Graham put an arm around the gas pump and reached out his crutch for my brother to pull himself to the dock. I reached out and caught the gunwale to steady it against the rise and fall of the waves. My brother carefully stepped from the canoe and onto the wet planks. He looked up at me, then for a long time at Mr. Graham, but no one spoke. The oil slick shimmered on the water at his feet. Droplets clung to the skin of his face. He reached to the bottom of the canoe and picked up two books, and a small strong box from the water that had shipped on the bottom. There was nothing more. He stood and lifted the bow onto the

(Continued on page 26)



Day Dry Slices of Crisp Unreality

in a crescendo of faded dreams
buried new in musky attics
and locked by licensed compromise
i search foot at a time backwards
down the snailspiral of first time
and remembered time and lost time
to unlearn the false facts of life
i retaste the cool morningfeel
of wet clarion earth sponging beneath
new toes#

nobody wanted the merry-go-round
But there we all were
basking in parental eternalizations
let us toast with church lemonades
to the resemblance which is more to flesh
than earth#

They gave me a cachet of mimosa blossoms
and chocolate chip ice cream and
rotting ionic columns and fishing poles
and toilets and broken glass
so i sought and found sacred
tent-tombs of firstlearned separateness
discovering myself and otherthings and toys
and toots and dots and zags and circles
and bangs and things#
praying to escape the cacaphonies
of people and insects and cities
i built a treehouse so far up i never
jumped down and here i am still
in my treehouse#

Wendy L. Salinger

A Letter

Sister,
the paper-
 thin
wall between

the rooms where we loved
ourselves has grown
into miles I walk.

But nothing moves
under my feet,
sister
 mirror;

I am afraid
of my blood
in you.



Robert C. Johnson

Elizabeth

Elizabeth leaned forward to look at her reflection in the water. She was wearing one of Bill's dress shirts and a pair of blue jeans she used to keep at her father's ranch. Her auburn hair was fastened in a bundle by a comb Bill gave her before they were married. She held a stick in her right hand and swirled it in the water, shattering her image. Standing up, she threw the stick into the lake, and looked across to the other side. The sun was setting behind the trees on the hill. At the northern end of the lake a wind was crossing the water. She watched as the reflection of the trees broke under the wind and listened as the wind advanced southward over the water with a long whisper into the leaves overhead. She smiled. As the wind approached she took the comb from her hair, then tossed the hair back with her hands. The wind blew the falling hair behind her and with a backlash forward over her face. She breathed deeply, put the comb in one of the shirt pockets and pushed aside the strands that were over her eyes. Her hair flowed in long tresses now as she looked at the water.

Elizabeth heard David behind her. "I called Bill," he said as he walked down the hill.

"What did he say?" she asked, not turning to look at him.

"He wasn't there. I guess he's on the way here." David looked down as he talked. He was standing behind Elizabeth on a rock. "I guess we should wait," he said. He sat on the rock, reached forward and picked up a walnut.

Elizabeth turned and looked at him. The wind blew her hair in front now. David looked at her sandals. "Let's go across," she said.

David looked at her face. She was smiling mysteriously. Sunlight shone from her hair.

Shouldn't we wait?" David said.

"We'll get things ready," said Elizabeth. "You come for Bill when he arrives."

David hesitated. He tossed the walnut into the water. "O.K.," he said. He got up, walked along the bank to the pier, went out, and kneeled on the boards beside the canoe, which was rolling in the water. He was wearing Bermuda shorts and when the head of a nail pushed into his knee, he moved.

Elizabeth walked toward the pier, smoking a cigarette. David put the thermos of lemonade and the charcoal grill into the middle of the canoe. He looked up at Elizabeth who was watching him from the first boards of the pier.

"Aren't you going to help?" he said.

Elizabeth smiled and tossed her cigarette into the water. She walked out on the pier and stepped down into the front of the canoe. She sat, lit another cigarette, and looked across the lake.

David lifted the bag of charcoal and dropped it behind her jolting the canoe. Elizabeth only puffed, however, and turned her head toward him. "Careful," she said.

"Are you sure you don't want to wait?" David said.

"It takes two trips anyway," said Elizabeth. "We can't all three go in one trip."

David didn't say anything, but put the fishing rods in the canoe. He had brought the canoe down only a few minutes ago from the shed, the same shed where he'd gone to call Bill. Anyway, the canoe was free, so when David got in he pushed out, trying to unsettle Elizabeth. She held herself steady, though. "Careful," she repeated.

David pulled a paddle from under the bag of charcoal, gripped it, and put it into the water. He made a long, deep stroke and they left the shore. Smoke blew into his face.

"Aren't you going to paddle?" he said.

Elizabeth was leaning forward, looking into the water. "No," she said. "You paddle."

He did, first on one side, then on the other, but the

wind was against him and it took a long time to cross over. The lake was a mile long, but at this point it pinched to a breadth of only one-hundred yards. Bill and Elizabeth liked to fish on the lake. When David came to visit his older brother, Bill suggested they go fishing there some afternoon. It turned out that Bill had to go to a job interview on the day they chose, so he told David and Elizabeth to go ahead in David's car. He'd be finished by four o'clock at latest, but they should go anyway.

"Slow down," Elizabeth said. They were nearly at the shore. She reached out, held a clump of reeds, and pulled the canoe to the bank. She stood up and stepped onto the grass next to the water. "I love this place," she said, starting up the hill toward the trees.

"Hey!" said David.

"You bring up the things," said Elizabeth. "You're stronger than I am."

"Jesus," said David. He got out and pulled the canoe onto the bank. He put the grill, the thermos, the charcoal and one of the fishing rods on the ground.

"David!" David looked up. Bill was calling and waving from the pier.

"Just a minute!" David shouted. "I'll come get you!" He pushed the canoe into the water, got in and started paddling with the wind. The canoe sailed quickly over the lake to the pier.

"Sorry I'm late," Bill said, getting in front and picking up the other paddle.

"I'll need your help going into this wind," said David.

"It's strong, isn't it?" said Bill.

"Yes, it is. Elizabeth wouldn't help me, though."

"Really?" Bill started pulling through the water.

"She wouldn't help with anything," said David.

Bill didn't seem to hear. He was looking onto the hillside. He saw Elizabeth come to the bank. She picked up the fishing rod.

"Hey!" Bill shouted.

"Hey!" she answered. "Stay in the canoe! See if you can catch a fish."

"Too much wind!" Bill shouted.

"Troll!" said Elizabeth.

"Troll?"

"Troll back across!"

"O.K." said Bill.

Elizabeth cast her line. Bill put the paddle down and picked up the other fishing rod.

"Do I have to keep paddling?" said David.

"No, just relax. I'm going to troll."

"It won't work," said David.

Bill cast his line.

"She doesn't want it to work," David continued.

"What did you say?" Bill turned around, glared at his brother, then turned back.

"It's true. She pretends to be weak so we have to do things for her. But when it's something competitive she has to be on top. Just watch."

"Listen, David. I have some good news for Elizabeth. You'd better not spoil it."

"Don't worry. I couldn't spoil it even if I wanted to."

"Listen," said Bill. "Just because you haven't any girl friends is no reason to hate her."

"Leave me out of it," said David. "She's a bitch."

"And pipe down! How does it look for me with you like this? I hope you haven't said any of these things to her."

David didn't answer.

"Hey!" shouted Elizabeth. "I got one."

They watched as she struggled to reel in a fish. She finally pulled a large-mouth bass onto the bank.

"It's enormous!" she yelled. "Five pounds, I bet! Come back! You don't need to catch anything."

"I told you," said David.

"Shut up," said Bill, reeling in. They paddled. "You say one word to her about your sick ideas and I'll . . ."

"I think I will," said David. "I don't think you could hurt me."

"You say one word . . ."

"I might tell Elizabeth what I think of her little trick."

"Dammit. I've got some good news for her. You'd better not spoil it."

"Elizabeth!"

"Shut up."

Elizabeth was putting charcoal into the grill. Her fish was flopping on the ground higher up the hillside. She turned when she heard her name.

"I thought we were going to cook on the hill," David said. The canoe touched the bank. Bill and David got out.

"You didn't carry the things up," Elizabeth said.

"You could have."

"I was busy fishing."

"It's O.K. down here," said Bill.

"Will you clean the fish, David?" asked Elizabeth. He looked at Bill who was pouring lighter fluid onto the charcoal. Bill looked at him.

"I didn't catch it," David said.

"But you're going to eat some of it, aren't you?" said Elizabeth. She was holding the fish down with a stick.

"I don't like fish," David said.

No one said anything for a minute.

"Bill," Elizabeth said. "*You* like fish, don't you?"

"Yes," said Bill. "I like fish."

"I think I'll go back," said David. "I don't like it here."

"How do you expect us to get back if you take the canoe?" Bill said.

"That's all right," said Elizabeth. "Let him go. We'll walk around the lake."

"What about the things?" Bill said.

"We'll leave them and come back later. They'll be here."

The sun had gone down behind the hill. The lake and trees around the pier were dark now. No one said anything. Bill struck a match and touched the charcoal. A fire started. He took a knife out of his pocket, went to the fish and cut its head off. Elizabeth folded her arms in front of her. The sleeves of the dress shirt were rolled to her elbows and David looked at her forearms in the firelight. He turned and went to the canoe. He pushed it into the water, got in, and started paddling. The wind had died and the sound of the paddle, slowly

pushing the canoe, was the only noise he could hear. When he reached the other side he got out and started dragging the canoe up the bank.

"What happened at the interview?" Elizabeth said.

"I got the job," Bill said. He was beside the water, cutting the insides out of the fish.

Elizabeth took her cigarettes from her blue jeans. She lit one on a hot coal.

"How much will you make on the job?" she said.

"Eight thousand a year," he said.

Elizabeth walked up the hill to the first tree of the woods. She sat down and picked up one of the walnuts that had fallen from it.

"Do you want to help with the fish?" said Bill.

Elizabeth tossed her cigarette on the ground. She thought for a moment. Then she threw the walnut over Bill into the lake.

Bill stopped when he heard it splash. He looked at Elizabeth.

"No," she said. "You fix supper this evening. I don't feel like it."

Art McTighe

Strobe Ticket Vision

through a garden's arch
the moans of crystal doves,
and visit iris and feather roses;
maybe voices are black fingers—
[frosting mirrors
leaves and motion scarlet widows—
shades and heads and saintly
velvet pastel halos—]
quicksilver speaks!
"shotgun eyes kisses . . . The real,
real, one more blind"

and medic and his tears, his chains;
are they silver, serving, slowly, solace—
and covers with chiffon;
watching, rising
blending as a fresh song—
a golden nightengale. . . .



Ann Saalbach

Now a Very Long Time Ago

The first day Wesley didn't come in, Phyllis just laughed while she put her apron on and said, "Hung over, but what else?" and standing there in the dusk back behind the counter, with her long red and brown hair living, waving all the way down her back, she was farther away than usual. The clock struck two and she counted it, Sandy saw her, one two, with her throat moving, staring into the bright sunlight of the doorway, and Sandy thought, Well one thing is the same, it's me watching her. Phyllis began lighting the cigarettes and stabbing them later into ash trays around the room, never seeming to smoke them. She was eighteen, which meant that now at last the days were gone when she and Wesley had sat together on the gravel of the parking lot, hidden between sports cars, drinking beer from the cans that Joe brought them. British racing green, thought Sandy, sitting backwards on the counter, swinging her bare feet up over the wooden floorboards, watching Phyllis count the strokes. She knew Phyllis could see the ocean out the doorway, down beyond the boardwalk and the white strip of sand, but that was all she knew.

Not much later the boys and girls came in, wet, hair plastered down, standing there dripping puddles of water onto the floor, ordering sandwiches, playing the pin ball machine. Phyllis leaned on the counter and smiled at them, and called out, "Hey kid, here's your regular, man, all wrapped up here," and they laughed and Sandy could see her brown eyes wrinkle in laughter too, but she would almost never come to the pier to dance after work, only answered by ruffling Sandy's hair and saying, "Dream on, dream on MacBeth."

Today she made the sandwiches quietly and watched the door and finally Sandy said, "Well, hell, man, what're you worrying about? Did you and Funny Looking have a fight?"

She shrugged, then laughed, then stopped. She had come back from college not much changed after all, except that there were the cigarettes, now, and she would never explain anything. In the morning when they got up to fix breakfast, Sandy always thought maybe Phyllis would tell her that day, sitting cross-legged in the middle of the bed and divulging the secrets. But it never happened, Phyllis not knowing, it seemed, that she was to tell any secrets. Sandy never even knew when she had started smoking, or who had given her the cigarette and lighted it and now Sandy hated the cigarettes, and Phyllis always stood there, inside herself, so that the times when Wesley came and they all drank beer and teased each other were the only times she didn't seem surrounded by a clear glass bell, so that any minute she might freeze in one position and never move again.

Wesley had been smiling even the first time Sandy had seen him, now a very long time ago, standing there on the white sand. The wind was blowing his streaked blond hair into his eyes and she could see him, far away down the beach, with his mouth opened in the laughter that would not reach her, his arms filled with mud. He dumped the mud beside a sand castle, leaving bits of it clinging to his chest, and the girl with him stood up, staggered in the hills of sand around her feet, the wind whipping her long yellow hair over her face. Shrieking, she pushed Wesley down. Walking closer, along the boardwalk, Sandy could hear them laughing, and when she looked ahead of her, she saw the empty boardwalk, little pieces of paper bouncing along it, and she couldn't hear anything but the wind roaring and the wooden signs swinging. "Everything here is sand or wood or water," Phyllis always said, but Sandy liked the sounds, and by the time she looked back, Wesley was standing up and dragging the girl, the same height

he was, and named Paula, to the water. Sandy thought he was beautiful, his yellow hair blowing straight forward, and she knew that she could never have been the girl with him.

When the wind was still blowing, hours later, and Phyllis was sitting backwards on the counter, bent over a crossword puzzle, she and Sandy heard him say, "Is this a delicatessen or a bar or a local hanging out place?" and he was standing there, short, straight, and square, with the drops of salt water still on him and the smile still on him. Sandy stood there, ordinary, but Phyllis said, "It's a delicatessen where you can drink or locally hang out," and her voice was warm and deep enough to swim through, thick enough to wrap yourself in, beginning and ending in such firmly fixed points that you couldn't ask for more or less than she'd given. Hey Phyllis, how do you do this?

"What kind of *screwy* broad are you?" he said and laughed and walked up to the counter, and although he was only 17, Phyllis gave him the beer he asked for. After that he came in every day to play the pin ball machine, putting his gleaming wet skin and white trunks and the ridge of his wet spine all in front of them as he bent over the machine, until he knew how to beat it and took all the money in the end.

The lights on the pier were always yellow and strung from poles. The music came from a record player and skipped when people danced too close to it. Underneath, the water slapped the legs of the pier, and the night that Phyllis finally came she stepped onto the pier easily, her hands in her jeans pockets or pushing her hair back. Wesley was there, half-sitting on the railing, then getting up and strutting across the boardwalk and through the door beneath the blinking sign that said bar.

Phyllis looked at the pier and the people. She saw Paula and the record player, and Sandy's face, silent and waiting. "Well hell," she said, and ran down the pier barefoot, and stopped only a moment under the sign that said bar before she went in.

"There's that *screwy* broad who always plays it so cool," said Wesley. Phyllis stared at him calmly, remembering how he had looked leaning over the glass-topped pinball machine.

For the rest of the summer there was Wesley calling Phyllis Girl and calling Sandy Little One and the three of them leaning all over the counter together. Wesley's laugh always sounded the same to Sandy forever. She could always say That's Wesley laughing. That's Wesley. Laughing. And that was Phyllis sitting on the counter, swinging her feet through the air, up over the floorboards, laughing too, the three of them safe and wrapped up at home, tasting the sea salt on their lips. I

will always be able to come back to Wesley's laugh and find it, waiting, in bottles somewhere. Sandy and Phyllis sitting at the pool hall, telling lies to the man renting the tables, waiting for Wes and watching him play and smoke. Sandy and Wes burying Phyllis in sand and Phyllis and Wes teasing Sandy, giving her her first drink, out of a wine bottle and seated between them, leaning against a Triumph, with gravel digging up into her and rain dribbling down her neck.

Phyllis had been drinking for a long time, and she did this easily, coming back to the store late at night where Sandy sat on the floor counting loaves of bread, laughing in the dusk of the store, her face in a shadow and her teeth showing dully, her long, living hair shaking down around her elbows. Standing there, her laughter seemed to freeze in the air with the smell of liquor gentle and heavy, and it was as if this were a moment snatched and held up, and God would say, "Here's a nice example of Happy Young America, perhaps you'd like it in red?" Then there was Sandy, that night in the parking lot with them, taking the drinks fast so that the wine would be down her throat and running into her blood and up to her head, making the rain in her clothes far away from her skin and her wet locks of hair somethings to laugh at. Wesley looked like he was in a little box at the end of a long hallway. "Or a tunnel," she said.

That was good but the rest was not, because they had run through the rain screaming, hours and bottles later, to the sand. Sandy found herself stumbling in the gritty sand, the ocean sounding cold and looking like gray cement, pounding next to her while Phyllis and Wesley were ahead of her, holding hands and pulling each other. She found them hiding under the boardwalk, shivering, and she lay down under it too on the sand, where everything smelled and drops of water fell on her head. Her clothes felt close and cold and horrible, but her body felt far far away, and Phyllis was laughing, her laugh seeming to grow in the darkness right next to Sandy's ear like a whispered song, and she said, "Wesley Wesley Wesley." Sandy hugged her own soggy ribs and began to cry because she was tired and confused, until she found Phyllis and Wesley near her, Wesley half-fallen onto her back, saying hush and patting her shoulders, and then, with her throat growing stiff, she knew she would be sick.

She started remembering again when she found herself sitting on the doorstep of the pool hall, which was now the scene of a party, and the word for her feelings was clammy. She put her hands around her feet to be able to feel them again, and tried to remember if she had started out the evening barefoot and she heard music staggering out the door behind her. Phyllis was

laughing, not an easy laugh, and she laid down on the step, looking upside down into the pool hall to see the sandy bottoms of Wesley's feet, protruding from a pool table, and Phyllis standing next to him, looking into his face and saying things. Next there was a boy walking out to the step and he sat beside Sandy and said, "Feel better?" She said, "Well well well," and tried standing up, ignored the way the step came up to hit her in the face, and finally made it inside. She looked at Phyllis' face, which swam a little in the sudden blur of everything, and kicked at some hand pulling at her ankle and Phyllis turned and looked at her, very serene and smooth, her whole body and face were smoother than anything Sandy had ever seen before anywhere. Her feet were planted on the floor and her hands were in her jeans pockets, and her hair was like long silken sopping ropes, leaving maps of water on her shirt. Phyllis stood that way for a few years, turning into stone there in the pool hall, and Sandy stared at her, afraid to look away and thereby allow the room to swing around her again, and as this was going on, Wesley sat up and threw the 8 ball through the window.

In the bottom of the summer in the cool dark store Wesley was telling Phyllis, "I'll kill any guy who looks at you funny," and Sandy remembered cutting her arm on the pool hall window as Phyllis took Wesley out to the boardwalk, watching her hair blowing in the wind and finally disappearing into the dark air, that night they had gotten drunk. Wes was saying, "My father keeps saying I should get a Billiards Scholarship, but *some* people believe in me," and Sandy remembered Wesley trying to catch in his mouth those wisps of Phyllis' red and brown hair, out there in front of her on the boardwalk. Then one of Wesley's friends ran in the door long enough to say, "Surf's up," and they both left together, visible for a moment as black silhouettes in the doorway. Sandy stood there, slowly wiping the counter over and over again, not looking up so she wouldn't see Phyllis staring out the doorway where they had disappeared. Will you write Phil? No I won't ask, this one more time.

Sandy's winter was all right, ok, and she put the little dime store picture of the three of them on her bulletin board, squeezed in together there in a glaring white light and Wesley grimacing. That was the one of the four pictures she had gotten to keep, and she wondered what Phyllis had done with her own, perhaps stuck it in her mirror in the dorm that Sandy didn't even know the name of or the shape of and what side of the hall should she picture Phyllis on, *where* was the bed that she had been lying on, says her last and only second letter all year, when Po and Claire had run in and thrown water at her (really only a picture post

card was the first letter, showing a barefooted orphan), and then she would point to the picture and say to Po and Claire and her roommate, "That's Wes and my best friend." Sandy's winter got along fine, happened along on schedule, no sweat, man, just live it through, and then she would suddenly thinks of Phyllis' winter, the one that was happening right then, day by day, exactly at the same time as Sandy's own, with each day different, not identical stair steps like Sandy's days. There it was, she would think, there it was, *right then*, and she couldn't get at it, and would never be able to. This was awful.

Phyllis had wondered for a long time about coming home, and she had wondered how she would go back to the store, if she would stand in the doorway and examine everything first, or if she would come back late at night and find a way in, to see it all over once by herself, sit on the counter and swing her feet through the summer night all around her, listening to the crashing of the waves and the clock in the silence, remembering Wesley and his smile, his square shoulders, the whiteness of him at night and the golden brown of him in the sunlight. But when she did come back she realized that all that would have made it even harder walking in again, and so she went with Sandy in the morning, running over the already burning sand and carefully tiptoeing over the splinters of the boardwalk. I can't look at anything, she thought, I have to look at everything. Behind her were the frantic days, the running up and down dormitory stairways waving her arms at people going by, saying, "Ha ha I laugh that I may not cry, my dear Alfreda," and in the boxes she had brought back sealed with tape she had hidden all the books and the pressed flowers and the photographs of waving people on ivy stone walls and the score sheets, papers she had tapped out in the early morning, the poems on jon paper, and somehow she had constantly found herself not knowing what she was doing, because nobody else knew what she was doing, and in the middle of hysterical freshman screaming laughter and trying to hate and love everybody, one or the other, and doing this she had somehow found out that everything about her was up to her, and so now the beach had turned into something different.

She was lucky, and managed to stoop down to pick up the paper when Sandy first opened the front door, and could read the headlines all the way across the open floor safely, without once having to look around and stare at things. Now she was Coming Home and she knew she would have to have an opinion about it, just like Going Away to School. Do you like school? What's it like? Was it easy was it hard, frightening, hot, rainy, crowded, was it fun or not, green, brown, two o'clock

or noon, tall or fat or was it full of ivy and is there a clock tower and do people throw themselves from it? "At least I didn't ever forget how much I hated the ocean, I *did* remember that," but now she had to start all over again, getting things in order of importance, remembering how she had felt about malted milk shakes and surfing and the pier with its yellow lights, and rebuilding her method for leaning her elbows on the counter and living over the people standing there screaming, dripping water on the floor. Sandy thought: Phyllis just walks right in and doesn't look at anything.

"Suddenly," she said to Sandy, "this isn't just the place you live. It's Home, it's been defined and you have to judge it." Sandy looked very pretty and breakable and young and ready to Phyllis, and Sandy was thinking, I was right, everything's different and I cannot understand and there it is even in her explanations.

Weeks still existed and days did too, and they happened, and she kept saying to herself, "Here I am again, and it will be all right now." When she went to the pool hall to watch Wes play, and looked out the win-

dow seeing people running into the waves and being-knocked down, their mouths open, she could hear behind her the balls falling into the pockets and Wesley laughing and being silent. She didn't turn to look at him often because he looked so easy and unbroken, coming back into the space he'd left, just like stepping into the last seat on a bus as it drove away, leaving the rest, her, standing outside on the curb. And she sat there, doing exactly what she had always done, saying, "This is exactly what I have always done, isn't it?" And she stood in the store, rubbing her bare foot on the floor, stabbing her cigarettes out, thinking, "There's something he hasn't said yet, what?"

But Wes was ok, all right, and doing fine, didn't need to hang onto her, and so she sat on the red and white checked table cloth one night and Sandy saw her cry. This terrified Sandy, standing in the back doorway in the silence and dark and hearing Phyllis cry for the first time ever, thinking No no no and wanted to catch the tears in her hands or squeeze them from her own eyes for Phyllis. Let *me* have them, let *me* cry them.

Wind

(Continued from page 14)

dock, then slid the canoe up on the rough wet planks. We stood there watching the river flow on, the water unquieted by the widening circle of gasoline. He turned and began to walk up the dock. He walked fast, but I slowed to walk with Mr. Graham, and he reached the boat house before we were half way there. Mr. Graham did not hurry but took care to see that his crutch did not slip on the oil, or catch in the spaces between the planks. When we reached the boat house, my brother was walking his motorcycle from the tin-covered shed where Mr. Graham let him keep it. He took the books and snapped them under the spring luggage holder on the rear fender. Then he opened the strong box and took out a wet lump of paper money. He slipped it under the top of his pants, between the dirty cloth and his hairy stomach. Mr. Graham and I were beside him now, watching. He

looked at us, then put the metal box on the ground. He mounted the cycle and kicked down on the starter pedal. The engine caught and the hot exhaust came back at us. It was filled with black smoke and sparks of orange, carbon fire. A spark landed on my arm, burning, but I did not move. He looked at Mr. Graham and nodded, but Mr. Graham did nothing.

He half-rode, half-walked the cycle to the asphalt road, and Mr. Graham and I followed. On the road he accelerated quickly, loudly, leaving a small wake in the water on the asphalt. He rode fast down the straight driveway lined with trees whose limbs and Spanish moss were torn and littering the road. But before he had reached the turn which would put him on the highway, the water on the road had crept back, filling the track he had left. I looked down at the dirty water and when I looked up he was gone.

I never saw him again.

Steve Garavelli

To Hammarskjold

“The ultimate surrender to the creative
act—it is the destiny of some to be
brought to the threshold of this in the
act of sacrifice rather than the sexual
act. . .” *Markings*

My friend,
 you are dead several years,
 and now your life's memory is a part
 of this quiet, autumn evening
as slowly I compare our lives—
 what yours was
 and mine may be.

Should I
 like you
grab a mantle of gray,
 obscuring the creation
 of my life.
Could I wait alone
within my own dull front.

Life so far
leads to the extremes of my being.
I am caught
by my imagination,
 like a bird flying
 on a wind above the sea
 carried farther
 than it could ever fly.
 When the wind dies
then I am caught
struggling alone.

We are still too weak
for where
our imaginations would carry us.
Even for you
that time had not come.

Did you think your life was,
 as mine seems,
cluttered and disarrayed?
Or was it at moments
tranquil
 like the blue, thin air
 in Scandinavian mountains.
You sought tranquility;
 you climbed those mountains
 to reach the plateaus which rose above
 the thunder on the glaciers.
Even when you struggled
it was quiet.
All surrounding was silence
and in your mind
 each lunge was planned.
Perhaps you thought
in planning
 each wound was inflicted
 and the blood
 spread from the dying body.

Then you died in silence,
in the quiet of a sleeping continent.
You call it sacrifice
and so finally release
the creation that was within.
That I envied
while others mourned.

But then you died again,
 not like the Christ you admired
 as your own body.
You died again
with the decaying idea
 of many other saviors—
one world,
one law,
and one eternal peace.





Advertisers' Index

Book Exchange	30	Ivy Room	32
Duke Barber Shop	32	Jack Rabbit Laundry	32
Duke Dining Halls	6	Lyons Hardware	30
Duke Laundry	3rd cover	Montaldo's	4th cover
Duke Press	2nd cover	Record Bar	1
Duke Stores	31	Sascha	4
Durham Engraving Co.	4	Seeman Printery	2
Foister's Camera Store	4	Straw Valley	31
Gothic Book Shop	31	West Side Pharmacy	32

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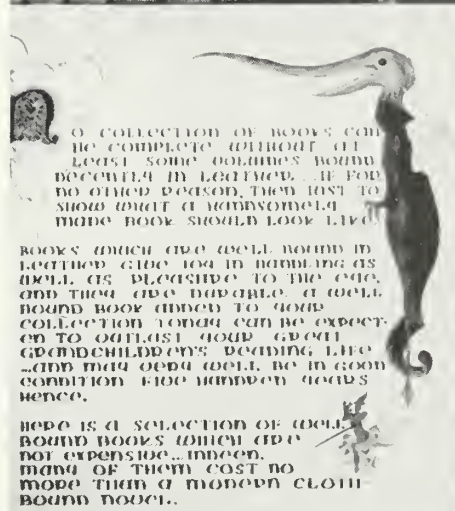
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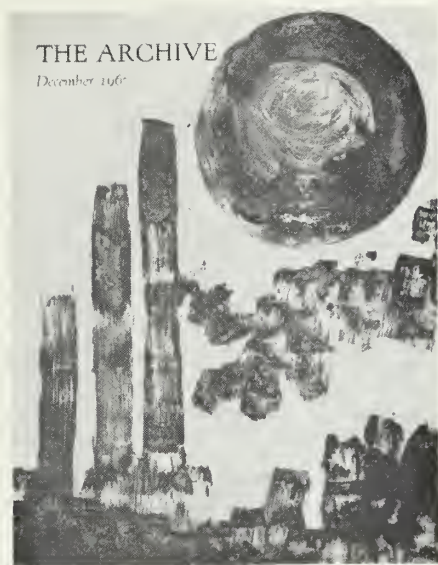
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CONTENTS

STORIES

The Gold Piano <i>by Betsy Sargent</i>	5
Last Letter Home <i>by J. Orpheus</i>	12
Eat At Maxy's <i>by Harry Stokes</i>	21
To Be Cold a Long Time <i>by C. O. Smith</i>	27

POEMS

Warm November Day <i>by Aden Field</i>	10
young marigolds <i>by Art McTighe</i>	11
the world is in a turmoil <i>by Huck Gutman</i>	14
Message <i>by David Moffett</i>	19
Notes 7-8/67 <i>by Wendy Salinger</i>	20
down in the darkness <i>by William Woodward</i>	26
Sylvan Armies <i>by Bev Chessman</i>	30
Poem <i>by Ann Mize</i>	30

PHOTOGRAPHS

"View" <i>by Carolyn Vaughan</i>	4
"Parking Garage" <i>by Paul Seder</i>	9
Portfolio: "Children" <i>by Paul Seder</i>	15-18
"Flower II" <i>by Bill Boyarsky</i>	27
Heidelberg <i>by Fred Daugherty</i>	31

ART WORK

Illustration: "Eat At Maxy's" <i>by Harry Stokes</i>	25
"Child's Head" <i>by Sharron Bailey</i>	26
"Girl In Window" <i>by Fred Daugherty</i>	29

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Betsy Sargent

The Gold Piano

It was the kind of house you looked at and knew that several years ago it must have been happy and homey on Christmas eve. A soft warm light must have spilled out in silent puddles on the snow from the two French doors that opened onto the porch and faced the street. Since it was winter, the awnings would be folded and in the basement and the snow would have drifted up to the ivy-colored brick walls and up to the wide white door between the other two. The ears driving slowly by through the thick falling white would be able to see the rainbowed lights of the Christmas tree which stood in the living room and whose needles brushed occasionally against the cold glass of the window. Two little girls inside, one five and one three, would look up at the enchanting tree and memorize the winding trails of the popcorn chain and the exact locations of the tiny sparkling silver drum and the miniature glass pheasant from Germany. Then their grandmother would call them away from the tree and the window and the world dark and cold and drifting outside because she had taken the music box from the cupboard under the bookshelf and was winding it slowly in her lap. The children would watch as she set the small golden piano on the floor and warned them not to touch it; it was very old. The crystal notes dripped like drops of water melting from the icicles on the eaves and fell bell-like on their ears. The tune meant Christmas to them for the rest of their lives.

But today the house squatted silently in the gray mid-December snow on Fairfax Road and people who didn't know old Mr. Turner drove past and vaguely wondered why number three twenty-seven had no wreath on the front door or sleds piled by the front walk as did three twenty-five and three twenty-nine. Mrs. Petrousky, who lived in the house next door, noticed the light in the study upstairs and hoped that Mr. Turner's son would bring his wife and two daughters home for Christmas this year. She hoped his son would have enough of a vacation from his new job to come home to Ohio for Christmas.

The old man sat alone reading in a well-worn

stuffed chair by the window. The yellowed pages of the book rustled like dry autumn leaves when he turned them; it was a work entitled *The Saving of the Soul* printed in England in 1752. At three o'clock he shut it carefully and put it back on the shelf with the rest of his collection. The mellow, musty smell was important to him and the books filled the room with it.

Mr. Turner buttoned the lower buttons on his loose brown sweater, opened the door, and stepped into the carpeted hall. The stairs were hard for him so he took them slowly, his long fingers clutching the rail and his thin legs meeting together on each step. He studied the worn spots on the rug as he went down; they were white against the soiled and faded crimson. He remembered his granddaughters tripping up and down the steps with laughing and shouting just the way their father had done forty years before them. Robert, the old man's young son, had come pounding down those stairs drawn by the warm odors from the kitchen and by the insistent calls of his mother who stood damp and pink-faced over the steaming pots of supper for them all. Quietly and inconspicuously, Robert's little sister Alma had walked from cupboard to table to cupboard again, decking the table for four and humming "Rock of Ages" with her mother and feeling quite domestic.

At the bottom of the stairs the grandfather's eyes stared ahead of him with a lonely disappointment; he had not gotten over the habit of waiting for the kitchen smells to come whenever he came to the lowest step. Mrs. Turner had been dead one year and twenty-three days. For one year and twenty-three days the smell had not come.

He warmed up a pan of soup on the old gas stove and stood over it stirring slowly and carefully. After the operation on his throat ten years ago—the operation that put his pipe useless into the back of his dresser drawer and the operations that took his voice from him—it had become difficult for him to eat. Gradually he had come to forget what hunger was; it was too exhausting to chew and too painful to swallow. And now the smells were gone, too.

The house seemed chilly and the hot air rising from the stove cuddled itself around him and brought a warm flush to his leathery cheeks. He was German and his dark coloring and bright eyes made him seem younger than his eighty-five years. It made him seem healthier too somehow; his skin did not hang loosely like the skin of old men, but was stretched taut from bone to bone. His neck was too thin, though, and the flesh, too hard and lean, was pulled in cords from the base of his chin to the collar of his plaid flannel shirt.

When the soup had been bubbling for a minute or so, he removed the pan and poured the broth and noodles into a deep china bowl. He sat at the end of a small white table in the corner of the kitchen by the back window and with a large spoon began to feed himself. For forty-five minutes he ate slowly and watched the cold day grow colder and darker in his back yard. He had put some sunflower seeds out on the feeder that morning and he timed his spoonfuls with the antics of the blue jays and the sparrows who strutted back and forth across it. At four o'clock Mr. Turner walked to the sink, putting his bowl and spoon among the breakfast dishes, and stood tiredly comparing the gray dinginess of the walls and the stained counter tops and the dust-laden window sill to the hard, clean surfaces which had reflected the days when his wife was still alive.

He was thinking that Eddie Petrousky might come over around five-thirty when the phone rang. He remembered that, thinking about Eddie and about how the kitchen used to be when the phone rang that day.

The old man stood by the desk in the living room with the receiver held to his ear. It was not until his lips and throat began forcing themselves to make the "Hello" come forth that he remembered his silent world. Ten years and he still could not always remember.

The voice on the other end of the line seemed to respond almost too easily and naturally to the rasping and guttural sound which fought its way in pain from the depths of him.

"This is Robert Turner, senior? And you have a son, Robert Turner, who lives in Eastfield, Pennsylvania? Sir, I'm sorry I have to tell you this. I work with your son in his New York office and he's had a bad accident. Your son's dead. His wife doesn't know yet. It just happened today. Your son is dead, Mr. Turner. He was going to leave the office a little early and on the subway . . ." The phone clicked at the other end. The old man pushed the small black button on the phone up and down with a shaking finger. Nothing came. Nothing. He put the receiver carefully back in place. Then he watched his

hand which would not let the receiver go, whose long veined fingers would not let the receiver go.

His eyes wandered slowly, emptily over the scarred desk. He stared at one corner of it, marked strangely by the whiplashes little Robert had given it once with an old belt. The picture of the sturdy little fellow, belt in hand, whipping furiously the back of the rocker by the fireplace and the corner of the desk came vividly to him; of course, they had punished him. But he had been pretending the chair was a horse and the desk was an Indian prisoner.

The hand gradually loosened its grip on the telephone and moved to caress the deep scars where the desk had been properly chastised. A smile almost came to the trembling lips. Almost.

Mr. Turner's favorite chair was a red-leather one in the corner between the fireplace and the French door. The radio was beside it, and a card table was in front of it bearing the most recent letters from the family in Pennsylvania and the magazines that had come in the past two months. A big glass dish of hard candy nestled in among the papers and the books on the table. When they came to see him that was where the two young ones always came first. Robert would walk in with a little girl hanging on each arm and suddenly they would all let go of each other and Robert would grasp his father's hand and say in his deep, wonderful voice, "Well, how are you, Dad?" The girls would each bestow a kiss on grandpa's weathered cheek and he would grin all over and nod his head hello and they would reach for the candy.

There was another jar of it on the mantle over the fireplace; that was insurance against running out. In long crowded rows on the mantle beside it were pictures— all the photographs that they or Alma had sent him from twenty years ago until now. The picture at the very end was forty-one years old; Robert and Alma were standing close together looking seriously out at him. One was six and the other four. He stared at it until his eyes burned and watered. One was six and the other four.

Your son is dead. Alma's chocolate eyes came at him from the picture and he suddenly remembered her. He raised himself nervously from the chair and returned to the phone. Alma lived only a twenty minute drive away.

He could hear it ringing on the other end of the line. Four times he heard it and the sound grew like a tumor in his ear until it stopped and she answered.

"Hello?"

He tried to respond, but the thought of the sound only clawed at the walls of his throat and could not escape. His labored, heavy breathing found its way through the wire.

"Hello?" Alma had a pudding-thick voice like her mother's.

"Dad? Is that you, Dad?"

The affirmative sound he was praying for was long in coming; the shape of his lips and a quick rush of breath replied to her.

"I'll come right over; you stay just where you are and I'll be there as fast as I can. Okay, Dad?"

He placed the receiver on the phone and relaxed, rubbing his wet palms down the sides of his trousers. He wondered who would take care of Alma's two sons when she came. The fireplace was cold and full of old ashes; sometimes when Robert came they built fires together there. Robert's wife loved a fire, especially at Christmas time. The shovel and tongs leaned unused against the stone near the black fire screen. Once they had had a little red-handled broom for brushing the ashes; but when Robert was still very small he had taken it and tried to sweep the flames of one cozy fire toward the middle of the log and the broom had caught. Panicking, Robert had drawn the crackling torch out of the flames into the center of the room and had begun waving it excitedly. He hadn't meant for it to burn. Mr. Turner had jumped up and grabbed the broom and thrown the whole thing in among the logs. Then he had held little Rob tight while the child cried.

He counted his steps to the front window and stood looking out at the snow. It was not at all soft or white or sparkling; it was not Christmas snow. He watched and saw that the world did not change or move for twenty minutes. Then a tan car came down the street and turned in at three twenty-seven. When the doorbell rang, he went to answer it.

Alma asked if he had called and he nodded yes. Then she followed him, mystified, to the card table where he sat down, found a piece of paper and scrawled it all out in pencil. She did not read over his shoulder but waited until he was done. Her eyes moved reluctantly from one side of the room to the other; then she closed them and did it again with her mind, painting it as it was when her mother was alive. The dust was thick now and the curtains hung limp and colorless and closed at the windows. A bowl with a spoon in it was resting on the end table by the couch. A napkin was crumpled beside it.

Alma was much like her mother; she had begged with her father to be able to clean it all up for him, but he didn't want anything moved or changed. And he thought she had enough to do. Sometimes when he was in the study upstairs she could manage to wash up the dishes and clean the kitchen, but that was all.

He turned and put the paper in her hand. She read carefully and kept the fear from showing in her

eyes. Her father watched her fingers tighten on the strap of her purse. He saw them move nervously up and down from one end of the strap to the other. Alma's voice was calm.

"Dad, I don't think this means much. Now you know no one would tell you before they would tell Helen. She'd be the first one they would call if it was official. Don't you think so?" She was begging him. The waver was there in her throat that told him she was begging him to feel that way. The fear had been in his head before. Now it moved to his abdomen and spread upward with long, grasping fingers.

"Now I'll have to call Helen and tell her this, all right? She has to know."

He nodded. It didn't make any difference. He could feel the fingers inside him, clawing and climbing upwards.

He only half heard the conversation on the phone. Helen's voice sounded small and tiny from his seat on the red leather chair. Alma had her back to him.

When she came back to the card table he was fingering a letter. She looked at the envelope. Eastfield. Alma stood behind him and put her hands on his shoulders and began to tell him what Helen had said. He looked ahead silently. Alma tried to sound confident. Her eyes were worried, though, as they settled on his bent and tired back.

"Dad, Helen has heard nothing. She can't find anything out now because Rob has already gotten on the train to come home by this time; it's five-fifteen already so the office is closed and there's no way to reach him. Now you know, since he's taken this new job and he has to commute, he won't get home until seven-forty tonight. Helen will meet him at the train and she'll call both of us as soon as he comes in to let us know for sure if he's all right. Okay? We just have to wait until about quarter to eight; she'll call when he gets in."

Her father didn't move. The words settled all together in his head in a warm comforting mass of sound but the fears sent long, clutching tentacles upward toward it. She picked up her purse and drew her winter coat closer around herself.

"Dad, I have to get home and feed dinner to the boys. You just relax and have a good supper; it was probably just a teenager who called to scare you for kicks or something. I've heard of things like this happening before. Helen will call you about seven forty-five just so you can rest easy."

The man sat very still and waited until he heard the door shut and the car motor start. The sound died away when she turned the far corner of Fairfax and Wilson. The ticking of the clock on the mantle was worse than silence. He wouldn't look up; he

was afraid of seeing the clock growing larger and larger and filling the room. He forgot to turn on a light as the sky by the window faded from gray into charcoal and then cold black. When the knock came at the kitchen door, he peeled himself with much effort from the leather of the chair and walked toward the sound. He opened the door to Eddie and smiled at him. The seven-year-old entered the dark house a little fearfully.

"Grandpa Turner, why do you have the lights out? Grandpa Turner?"

The old man smiled at him and nodded his head.

"May I turn a light on, Grandpa?"

The head still nodded and the child turned on the lamp by the phone in the living room. Mr. Turner watched him unseeing; then he remembered why Eddie always came and he went to the candy dish and lifted the lid. The child's hand slid into the candy and closed in a fist.

"Thanks, Grandpa. How've you been today?" The hand was emptying itself into his jacket pocket, hoarding all except one piece which was being greedily and hastily unwrapped. "Have you gone sledding yet, Grandpa Turner? Mom says that if you can work your garden in the spring and if you can cut the grass and rake, you ought to be able to go sledding when winter comes—sledding with me sometime. You could use my sled if you wanted."

The old man smiled and shook his head as the boy had expected him to. Eddie had big, serious eyes. Mr. Turner looked at and beyond the boy, his eyes on a tangled bundle of arms and legs, all jacketed in red and pulling determinedly at an obstinate boot with two chubby hands. He watched the puddle of melting snow form on the carpet around his tiny son, but the little Eskimo, his back propped up against the side of the sofa, seemed unaware of it. Eddie followed the old man's vision to the corner of the couch and the bowl and the spoon on the end table.

"Why are you looking at the bowl? Mr. Turner? Grandpa? Why are you looking at the bowl?" The child was puzzled and afraid.

"Grandpa, I think I'd better go. Dinner'll be soon." The old man suddenly saw Eddie, small and turning to leave, and he shook his head. He grabbed the dish from the card table and followed the boy to the kitchen.

"More," His lips formed the word. "Stay and take some more."

Eddie paused for a second and then understood. He reached into the bowl again and filled his other pocket. He turned and opened the door.

"Thanks an awful lot, Mr. Turner. Grandpa, hope you feel better tomorrow. Thanks for the candy."

The grandfather shook his head again, but the boy only looked at him and then went out into the night. The old man remained in front of the open door until he grew cold. His hand tightened on the candy dish and he turned and began to walk through the empty house. The cellar door opened as he watched a hand turn the knob slowly. He descended and switched the overhead light on at the bottom of the steps. The work bench lay in front of him and he looked at the jigsaw that he had used to make puzzles for his son and daughter. Rob had cut big pictures of trains out of magazines and off calendars and pasted them onto thick cardboard and had stood watching while his father cut the picture into a hundred lobed shapes. Then Rob would put them all in an old box and carry them upstairs to put together on the living room floor.

He flipped the black switch down and left himself in darkness to mount the stairs. He walked through the hall to the dining room and set the candy dish on the table. The heavy, white lace tablecloth was still there, spread out carefully and turning gray in the dust. In the center of the table sat a tarnished silver tea set, tarnished almost black. The plants by the window were brown and dry and dead. Mr. Turner went to the buffet and took the white linen napkins out of the bottom drawer. He placed them efficiently around the large table, four on each side and one at each end. They had had Christmas dinner there three years ago, and Robert had given a wonderful blessing for the ten of them. The table was ready; they might come this year, they might all be together again—all ten. Alma and her husband and their two sons, Rob and his wife and two daughters, his wife and himself. He counted the napkins to make sure—ten. Exactly right. He would have to remember to ask Rob to get a Christmas tree for the living room.

Suddenly it occurred to him that the red leather chair and the card table were in the corner where the tree was supposed to go. Perhaps they would arrive soon and they'd all come in and there would be no place to put the tree. With trembling haste he moved through the hall to the living room. What had he been thinking of? What had he been doing with his time? How could he expect them to come if nothing was ready? As he dragged the card table noisily to the center of the room and tugged at the large leather chair to get it, too, out of the corner by the window, he was calculating how many pounds of turkey they would need. His wife always had him pick the turkey for her; he'd go down and buy it as soon as he helped her get the house ready.

The chair was resting beside the card table now and Mr. Turner looked at the corner and was satis-

fied. There would be plenty of room. He went to the cupboard under the bookshelf and bent down uncomfortably to open it. On the bottom near the back was the box of Christmas ornaments they saved carefully from year to year. He tried to remove it smoothly and gingerly, but he didn't have much time. The clock said seven fifteen.

"We'll just have to wait until about quarter to eight; she'll call when he gets in." His fingers fidgeted with the knotted twine around the box, which he had placed on the floor. Frantically, he pulled at the cord until it broke. Then he tore it away and lifted the lid. One by one he extracted the delicate glass balls and placed them on the card table in readiness. The silver drum and the tiny pheasant were last and those he displayed on the mantle beside the clock. He didn't have much time.

His eyes wandered slowly over the room. Something was missing; he couldn't remember precisely what it was but something was missing, something important. The world outside was white on the bottom and black on top. The French door looked out on the deserted street and he watched for them to come. Icicles hung from the gutter and dripped slowly. He could see the drops falling off outside the glass and imagined them falling cold and crystal in the snow. The drops fell rhythmically and silently, again and again.

He kept thinking that he heard a car turning onto Fairfax and slowing down out front. Sometimes he thought he heard their steps on the front walk and sweat would break out on his forehead. It wasn't

ready yet. The room had the look of Christmas and the tree would bring the evergreen smell. Rob would build a fire and put the warmth in the house when he came; maybe Helen could help him choose the turkey tomorrow morning. But still it wasn't ready.

He did not know if it was the harsh, vibrating ring of the phone, which broke the silence, or the silence itself which made him remember; the sudden sound and the memory seemed to come upon him both at once. Ignoring the insistent jangling from the small table near the lamp, he turned again to the cupboard. His fingers groped inside it along the shelves, searching. Finally they came to the music box recognizing the feel and the shape of the cold metal and wrapping themselves hungrily around it. He pulled the golden piano out into the light and with an obsession began to wind it. The small key had rusted and fused itself to the metal; his fingers seemed to grow together as they tightened around it. They would not move. The phone rang a third time from the table beside him.

Suddenly, the key gave way and the grandfather wound the box with a trembling hand. After a moment, he set it on the floor and guarded it as the notes grew and fell in full, crystal drops like water melting from the eaves. Peacefully, he closed his eyes for a moment and saw white snow falling and the blue, the red lights of the tree reflected on the window pane. Then he opened them and watched as a brown, wrinkled hand with thin, fingers and long, flat, yellow nails wrapped itself around the black receiver and pulled it toward him.



Aden Field

Warm November Day

From this upper window
I have a view of the street.
Now, almost all the day,
I have awaited the sound
that will not come.
The slanting sun in the west
falls on the branches in my view.
The few leaves are spots of dull green.
The magnolia bears glints of green
and lit backs of rough russet brown.
And the wind blows softly,
rushing now one, now many leaves,
scuffling along the street
with a fluttering dry crackle.
The house is full of noises,
and my head keeps turning
like a puppet's toward the sounds.
The wind makes feet among the leaves.
The creakings are slow feet
upon the stairs, or cautious knocks
against the downstairs door.
The cars on the street frighten me.
I am weakly fearful lest I either have
or do not have what I want.
But I take delight, seeing the bright backs
of holly leaves that glow yellow in the sun
beside the deep green of shadowed leaves.

I am caught up in the whispering fall
of a few narrow, lanceolate leaves
that whirl in toy spirals athwart
the frame of my window.
I am strangely stirred and pleased
by the slow rattling of leaves in the street.
Vivaldi and Scarlatti wash the air
and whisper quiet things. The room grows dim.
A warm breeze wafts in the window,
this unseasonable, warm November day.
A gust of the wind takes my poem away,
and I am content, though all discontented,
that it should also be a leaf in the wind.
But it is not true that my ambiguous
emotion discards the moment
which let the poem be, and I pick up
the sheet, somehow bewildered
that my breathing is not altogether
changed, for again I cannot be still,
and I move, and watch at the window,
and start at the noise of passings.
This upper window,
with its view of the street,
frames the changing moments,
the dying light, the dull sounds
of leaves, and the silence growing
imperceptibly more alive with my thoughts.

Art McTighe

Young Marigolds

she sang in song as red emeralds, they forget the marimba bands of death
that play along the scarred highways and the black pastures,

she picked young marigolds and dandelions from the green necks and the
lull in the groves where steel cuts spill molten blood

----- so silently as grief

i watched her take up cups of self and trip through sun beat casket moans—
and under this i would not know but to place sad flowers
on her window grave—

and let the poplars reach down crying as they bend/

such shame it is i murder now— leaving remnants of once loving flesh
aside and scattered on the top of the afternoon's hill,

and take my axe and wear away the pillars

the golden star and crimson smears have sealed within her rose/

J. Orpheus

Last Letter Home

Hail Philip!

Twas tinkled to the glittering pink tip of my little lingam to hear from you. Your letters always inspire the sort of idiocy which enlightens and alters my conscious being. Speaking of being, why don't you try decency. All those bad words that have found habit in your vocabulary. Shame and social injustice! By golly, I think your tongue groweth shorter, old boy. But leave us not dwell on trivial things. Now for the dulcimer godfood and poetry of Hollis.

DISPATCHES OF DARKNESS

or

THAT MONSTERS MAY BE BEGOTTEN

(much drinking)

or

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SHORT NOVEL

(much vomiting)

or

THE WORLD'S SHORTEST GREAT NOVEL

(audience leaves)

preface from "The Concise Wit of Jesus" (admission is refunded & this becomes a book)

"Ye are welcome," said he to them with a ghastly smile, "in spite of Mahomet and all his dependants. I will now admit you into that palace where you have so highly merited a place."

& from the meditations of Buddha . . .

" * "

I

Having already esteemed ourselves to be of spiritual Intelligences and finding this supposition verified by experience, the problem becomes advancement to

a new and higher plateau. But are the next steps to lead to a dangerous precipice on Life's Hill thereby risking plummeting to the lowly sediment of humanity? Thankfully no. Last week I received a call from the Caliph, who is the living son of god and the last of the pre-Adamite Kings, and he has proffered to me the soul-boggling ANSWER. There is, There exists in the regions of Platonic forms and Caliphian truths, an advanced state of being known as the CELESTIAL MIND ? I was seized by the colossal significance of this deliverance and fell prostrate into the stereo mechanism. The automatic control switched on and it started to play, aligning itself on the part in my hair. A flock of geese entered through the door I can't understand how they got the key) causing gold dust and saffron to drift about ethereally, the sound of music issued forth and I gazed up to discover that my heliport was afire! first There was a troop of Girl Scouts chortling "Let's All Go Tear down the Cross" Lead Belly was singing about Old Bill, and then Doris Day performed with great sentiment "Hail to Phil's"—other subtle melodies resounded. But dear god it was my blood—Lots of it gushing profusely, inundating the whole of my stereo cabinet. my skull had been eviscerated by the goddam sapphire needle. At that I fell into a deep coma and cannot to this day remember who I was or how much that call cost. Officials of the Red Cross and local commanders met and had me flown to the Gobi Desert where a column of whiteclad semenologists waited rigidly at inattention, but invading hordes of AMA conventioners decimated them, burning their tree houses, confiscating their spider collections. These malignant phantoms of the AMA were savage demons akin to ogres. They were doing the lascivious dance of the Skulls, flagellating one another and others but I slipped away somehow and found refuge in a cavern near Abin in Persia. You should have seen all the glaciers. For

three years I remained in that cavern which was about thirty feet in length and six inches of height, subsisting on cactus milk and chopped sirloin. Finally an aquaplane landed nearby and i was approached by a party of drunken revelers including Gary Powers, Goebbels, Albert Schweitzer, Mamie Eisenhower, and others of the crusty mold, and they asked me for directions to Mecca and I told them to jump up a rope, I'd paid my dues. I felt sort of giddy and was befallen by phantasms, cataclysms, exactipations, euroctipatids, evoking kalidoscopic visions of elephant-monker-cancer crabbed pinwheels vertigoing—In all directions strange distant fires. How I slipped into the terrible abyss I can't say but I fell weightlessly into subterranean ecstasies for at least twenty minutes only to be washed to shore again, walking only one foot-print each step as ebb tide ebbed away. About that time a tremendous flood came upon the earth and everything was destroyed. I woke up as the First Man. Suddenly a voice boomed, "Let Man have Apples!" and so being confused I took a bus (a school bus at that) to Cleveland and established the World's First Sanitorium. Day and Night I worked, perfecting the Sanibomb because I knew I had to destroy the earth before God screwed things up completely. However, some s.o.b. told my native workers that I was going to relocate, they ran away, and I shot down every blasted one of them with my many cannons. This is all so complicated that I wish I could explain this business. However I have put almost 9,000 nails in my ceiling and it's beginning to CAVE . . . The building has collapsed . . . noises of the onlooking crowd die away into a silence that is only occasionally punctuated by the bestial utterance of some joy or anguish too savagely violent to be repressed.

II

It was getting quite late and the 3rd feature was beginning to play. We left the drive-in after having another brew and a short frenzied session of making-out. She asked if I had any contraceptives. I searched my wallet, the glove compartment, and even looked beneath the car seat, but none could be found. My date was quite reluctant to have sexual intercourse without protection. Her older sister, Molly, had about three years before become pregnant and the family has lived in disgrace ever since. We argued the point over cigarettes, but Jenny refused to yield and so I drove about a mile down the road until we came to a service station that owned a rubber dispenser in the Men's Room. Her cousin Jack was there, sitting with a silly grin on an upturned Coca-Cola crate and I knew the little bastard would say something later.

Soon, we were parked on a little dirt road that led

down to Buck Swamp where the Negroes went fishing for brim and catfish and they burned old rubber tires to keep the mosquitoes away. Lightening bugs teased one another among the chantilly spray of maypops and honeysuckle that covered all sides of the road. Gingerly I squeezed her thigh.

"Hollis, Baby, are you SURE it's all right? Are you absolutely sure?"

"Absolutely sure," I replied from the depths of the new, self-validating sensitivity. Very gently I stroked her hair.

"A mortal shape," I whispered, gently puffing in her ear and remembering Keats, "indued with love and life and light and deity. A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning, a vision like incarnate April."

"Go on," she whispered with a smile of sublimity as the nuptial darkness fell upon us.

III

217th Day. Captain Midnight is steadily becoming a monster whose only fuel, sole source of life, is alcohol. He keeps mostly to his cabin and the first mate Griffon and I perform all labors of office. At 0440 old Jamie says he spotted a glacier off about 30 furlongs but this is dubious because we are too near the edge of the earth for that sort of jolly thing. Not one live thing has been seen for 18 days. The whole world seems kind of buggy to my way of looking. The men keep mostly silent. No one really expects to live through this. Of late they have taken to odd amusements. Bugger rolling contests, lint hoarding, and I just noticed that my supply of ink is getting terribly low. Guess Crazy Lennie is at it again, running around with that black tongue and all. The only thing that keeps me going is my supply of Kents. They really satisfy, never let you down when the living really counts. Nobody goes down to see the Whore anymore. With them creepers and all that funny goocy stuff around her eyes. Poor Alf died late afternoon. Seems he put his choppers in upside down, and, poor soul, ate most of his brains out, before anybody could help him.

Christ Almighty, it is almost 5 A.M. I am closing my cyes almost. Apologies for the preceding, unprecedented, presentation. Garland festooned for literary and personal absurdity, I am moved now to conventionally congratulate you on your superior choice in a wife-love. By golly, you've got a good girl in Sharon, I mean, Ruth. Why can't I be serious, am I a fool? Your silence supplies the answer. Really she's nice. I like her. etc. If you need a bestman or usher or flowerboy or bartender at the reception please call on me.

Your budd bloody,
p.s. write soon. Don't let the bastards get you and Ruthie down.

Huck Gutman

The World is in a Turmoil

The world is in a turmoil;
Massacre and poverty set loose;
Inaction calls the song the fiddler plays
As tortured frames dance twisted souls to dust.
The governments of men are in the hands of careless children;
Symbols lose all meaning;
Men's bodies, born in bondage, grown in hate,
Litter sterile unworked fields.

In my desert,
Amid the ancient copper nails
And winding sheets in Cheops' tomb,
I find a phial of honey.
In this time of bitterness
Old peace drops sweetly on my tongue.
Each age has its secret hive,
Its source of comfort and delight.
But ages pass;
Our modern world in jealous rage
Has killed its bees.
Few, too few, unopened tombs remain.

My honey cannot last;
I taste of salt, of sweat, of tears.
My modern love,
As napalm fires burn in mortal flames
As tortured screams tread air with broken wings.









David Moffett

Message

Now when you are beautiful and tired,
I'll confess it, I thought if ever
Truck or hope or telephone wire
Or the intestinal U.S. Mail crossed that void
We'd fling great effortless bridges there,
Time-unfooted, monuments to no eye.

But we must deal in sadness with
Impossible human joints and articulations;
The hands of saintless old drunk women
Sallowing the patience of their beads also
Outrage every crystal of our lives.
Those faded characters who come like motes at dusk
Touching their dry shopwear like a flame to the goods,
Each awaited instant,
And there are years in a grasp.
We did it too! For each bauble at your throat
Thousands lapse together in sooty drifts like tired snow in
Garbage can alleys whose mercy the sun never tries, or else
Sold at a grimace and delivered into careless hands.

You knew then, and I too suddenly now, that
At death or departure, houses fall ramshackle in the veins;
All those rooms, kitchens, back stairs, secret chambers,
Some were not even lived in anymore,
Full of furtive spiders.
I swear
The rancor of disused perfumes
Is the ruin of every brilliant eye.

Wendy Salinger

Notes 7-8/67

I

Least visible
in Colorado, this:
The line between mountain
and sky.

Inaudible
alto
line of Colorado
deceiving the cadence
of sky
and mountain.

Line of most secret writing.

II

Colorado, there is worse
than these mountains
we climbed: the mind: no-man-fathomed.

Hopkins, who said it,
knew landscape
inscape
no escape
there is none.

Harry C. Stokes

Eat at Maxy's

Maxy slumped in the canvas seat and gazed at himself in the bus window. He watched his face against the muddy dawn that trapped his reflection on the window pane, disappearing and reappearing as the yellow light in the bus flickered on and off. He watched until it was light enough outside to see the pike, light enough to make his reflection in the window disappear for good, then turned around and leaned his head on the glass, shifting the paper bag in his lap to the seat, letting the vibrations of the road travel from the bus to him.

He gazed at the fat gray-haired woman sitting behind the bus driver. She was half asleep, head slumped slightly forward, her chin indistinguishable in folds of fat. Her white dress, spotted with small pink flowers, couldn't hold her bulk in; it rolled down into her lap and shook on her short legs. He could see the coarse white strands of the dress against the black sweating body, and already there were stains under her arms. Her dress was tinged with a reddish color, from the clay in the soil. (It was a mark the Pine Barrens left on you—that red stain from its soil.) A maid's uniform bulged from a frayed carpet bag that she had wedged between her heavy-heeled shoes. She must have been going the twenty-five miles into the city.

Maxy turned his eyes to the boy sitting across from him. He seemed vacant, smoking and staring at the fat woman's shoes. He let the smoke drift from his parted lips, breathed it back in, then exhaled it. His youngest son was about that age now—about twenty. Working up in New Jersey, or somewhere. But he had his own life to lead. He couldn't be writing letters. His oldest drove trucks from Dallas to Los Angeles and had left two babies and a wife in the Barrens with Maxy. The yellow light in the bus reflected off the boy's leather jacket where the folds billowed out, making the black look a dirty green. Maxy watched the mulatto finger his cigarette. He wasn't from these parts. Passing through to Atlanta maybe.

The bus bumped over the Shelby railroad crossing and made an abrupt stop. Caught off balance Maxy slid further down in his seat. Four school girls hurried off the bus. Maxy looked outside at the small clay-

colored school and struggled to sit up, knowing but not thinking that his stop was next.

Climbing down from the last step, slowly, Maxy covered his almost bald head with a shapeless hat and watched the bus pull away. (It ran from Calahatchie Springs, made a stop in Shelby and went on up to the Georgia line.) Maxy rubbed the back of his neck where a few white hairs twisted from beneath his cap. The pike remained empty after the old yellow school bus disappeared, and the morning became silent when the irregular beating of its engine could no longer be heard. He put the paper bag under his arm and shuffled along the road's clay shoulder, watching the reddish dust puff out from under his heavy shoes as he stamped them into the dirt. Without looking up Maxy turned onto the gravel driveway to his place.

The old man set his package down, pulled the key out of the pocket in his brown jacket, using both hands, one to hold his unzipped jacket, the other fumbling in his pocket. His dust covered boots ground on something as he climbed the cement steps. He looked down at the crackling noise.

"Them kids. They bring me nuthin' but trouble." He brushed the glass off the steps with his foot and squinted at the neon sign above the door. The E was broken and more glass lay by the creosoted footing of the frame building, under the sign "Eat at Maxy's."

Maxy opened the door in mild disgust and left it open. He walked around the room and let the shades flap as he jerked on the cords, watching them snap open. The musty, grease-laden air oozed out the windows as he opened them and the already warm day seeped in. He squinted at the old clock behind the bar that had CREOLEE BEER written around it, instead of the numbers of the hours. A red diamond marked the twelfth hour, C was one, R was two. The hour hand was near the B—almost 8:00. Maxy shuffled to the open door, stooped slowly, picking up the bag and retreating with it to the back room behind the counter. He returned, leaned against the door post painted white, peeling, and waited for Burta.

She came at 8:30, breaking into Maxy's dreams, (he was watching a train of ants carry off a pill bug that had rolled itself up into a tiny black ball) brush-



ing past him through the door, her arms hugging a large basket of tomatoes. She set the basket down on the bar, wiping her hands on her stained apron.

Maxy turned, smiled, "Mighty nice of you Burta, mighty nice. Where you pick them tomatoes, girl?"

"Down in the bog Mista Monroe. Out patch yonder past the big tree." (The old tree the kids climbed, Maxy thought.)

"Never saw no such pick in the world Burta!" He took an old ladder-back chair off the table near the counter and sat down. Burta began taking the rest of the chairs down, wiping their wicker seats and the splintering table tops with a wet rag.

"Mama said some kids was a chuckin' the place last night, Mista Monroe. They was a cloddin' your sign." Maxy nodded.

"Mama was gonna, but I said 'Doncha call no cops. They ain't gonna come nohow.'" The thick smell of oil cloth spread over the room as Burta covered the tables.

"Them kids bring me nuthin' but trouble Burta, nuthin' but heaps a troubles. Always costin' me too. But they don't mean no harm. Just lookin' for fun."

The new yellow sun was the level of Maxy's front windows now. It diffused through spots of grease, congealed on the glass; it streamed into the room, turning the back wall and the bar from dark to light.

Maxy watched his shadow on the front of the counter shrink and swell as he breathed. He wondered why they had left—but his kids belonged to a different generation and had a right to do what they wanted. (The Pine Barrens were no place for kids anyhow.) He knew most of them still left here in the Scrub—they were always dreaming of the day they might be old enough to leave. They'd come to watch the big trucks that stopped, and would help him work the diesel pump. They would pull root beers from the old cooler and sit on the front steps, or inside away from the sun, just like his youngest used to, and ask him about drivers and trucks that stopped. And Maxy would watch them, caught in their dreams, and wonder about his kids and then of his own childhood. A long time gone.

Maxy fell asleep; snoozed all morning, waking once to move himself back into the sun. The road crew of convicts came in for breakfast like they did all good weather mornings. Old Derk, who owned the general store in Calahatchie Springs came in before noon and passed the time with Burta and one cup of coffee.

Just past twelve o'clock a dark green sedan stopped directly in front of the open door. Burta broke off her conversation with old Derk, tiptoed over to Maxy's chair. She touched the old man on the ear.

"Wake up Mista Monroe . . . There's somebody's car outside. Ain't nobody I seen before." Two boys climbed out of the front seat of the sedan. A tall, pale, black-haired fellow walked around the car, and joined the other who was brushing the dust from his trousers. They climbed the steps slowly and walked through the open door. The shorter one, blond and pudgy, smiled at Maxy.

"You got the two pints for me . . . Maxy? The old man didn't answer for a bit. Then he grunted,

"Wait," and lumbered into the back room after the paper bag.

The two boys sat down at a table in the center of the empty room, slouching in two wobbly wicker chairs. The shorter one glanced at Burta; electrically she turned her stare away and retreated behind the counter. She picked up a rag and pretended to pre-occupy herself with wiping the dishes. The two boys looked at Derk, saw his white watery eyes, squinting out from loose folds of ancient flesh, fixed upon them intently.

"Hay Mister Darcy, whatcha lookin' at?" the taller one taunted. He stared back at the old man. Derk rose, left his cold coffee and shuffled out the door, his eyes avoiding the boys and their green sedan.

The other boy, paying no attention to his friend, watched Burta as she dried the dishes. He pulled a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket,

still watching her; the crackling of the cellophane broke the temporary silence. Without turning he whispered to the tall boy:

"Look at that nigger girl, Bo." And Bo followed his gaze.

The afternoon sun filled the room and reflected on the countertop. Burta thought only of escape; she didn't dare look but she knew they were staring at her. She tensed; the sweat began to ooze from her whole face.

Maxy came out of the back room quietly, the brown bag in his hands. He saw the boys watching Burta, and made a sudden noise, kicking the counter with his heavy boot. The boys turned their eyes quickly from her. The shorter one glanced apprehensively at the old man, but Maxy wore a faint smile. The dark haired boy rose and approached the counter.

"Thanks, old man—for the bottles." The other, who still sat at the table, saw Burta turn her gaze from the dishes to Maxy. As she turned her head he watched the muscles in her graceful, curving neck work. He saw her sweating cheeks reflect the light and her jaw-muscle tighten and relax, making her dark, smooth skin twitch. She had large almond-shaped eyes. The boy tensed. He traced those curving eyes into her smooth, flat, upturned nose.

"Gonna have good times tonight Maxy, thanks to you!" Tall boy rolled a silver dollar on the countertop and pulled a folded dollar bill from his wallet.

"Here-ya-go—. Change is yours, old boy."

Burta had her hair pulled up from her neck. It made her seem taller, more graceful. She bit her lower lip as she watched Maxy put his hand over the silver dollar. Her lips were soft and full, slightly pursed as though she were sucking in a breath of air. They were parted and the sun glistened on those lips as she wet them with her tongue. The seated boy turned a ring around on his finger and watched her bare arms move as she mechanically dried the dishes. She wiped a drop of sweat from her temple with the back of her hand, the white dress pulling tight over her bosom. The boy imagined her small, firm belly and the curve of her back into her buttocks—which were hidden by the counter.

The other grabbed the bottles from the bag Maxy had given him. The noise broke his friend's preoccupation; he looked at Maxy but saw he had not been discovered.

"Let's go—; it's gettin' on." The dark haired boy caught Burta's terrified glance on him.

"Come on with us, girl. Maybe we'll even give you a drink!"

Old Maxy's smile disappeared. "That's all you



come for boy. You want no more," nodding at the bottles.

"Yeah, yeah Maxy, I'm goin'." He crumpled the bag in his large pale hands and started to toss it out the door.

"Oh—sorry, sorry old man. I forgot." Maxy frowned. Delicately the boy uncrumpled the bag, put it on the bar and smoothed the wrinkles out of it.

"Didn't mean to crumple your bag . . ."

He gripped the necks of the two bottles and backed off, laughing. The shorter boy stood by the door, staring at Burta. Maxy took the white boy's laughter stolidly.

Sensing his friend's thoughts the taller one blurted, "I wanna see you tonight, girl." He grabbed his crotch, "I bet you can really give it!"

The blond boy had left. The other, back to the door, puckered his lips and mimicked the girl's terror with a contortion of his face. He retreated to the car; the other had already started it and was racing the engine. The sedan accelerated quickly and disappeared as it turned onto the pike. Red clay powdered in the air, drifted in through the doorway.

"Mista Monroe," Burta's voice trembled.

"Them kids bring me nothin' but trouble, they bring me nothin' but trouble," Maxy grumbled.

"Mista Monroe, what they fixin' to do to me?" Burta quivered. "Mista Monroe . . ." Maxy was thoughtful. He paused before he spoke, as though he had not understood her question.

"They ain't fixin' to do nothin' honey. Now go easy. They was just playin' with you." Burta ignored him. Shaking, she tried to work again, wiping the already clean counter, redrying the dishes. Maxy watched her face, wanting to understand her terror.

Few people came in the rest of the day, as though they could feel the uneasiness of the place and sought to avoid it. Burta was sullen. She waited on the customers without a word or smile. The road crew came in for supper late in the afternoon and she brought them a large pot of stew. The convicts saw the pout fixed on her stolid face and were quiet. Burta sat with them as she always did, but her hands trembled so that she hid them in her apron.

Maxy went outside as he did every evening, turning on the neon sign and the light beside the door. Moths gathered around the damaged sign, their wings made soft beating noises as they struck it, crazed with the light. The gentle noise of the moths' wings, the incessant buzzing of the sign, the close but distant-sounding hum of the cadydids grew louder, pouring into the vacuum-like silence of Maxy's place, where heavy porcelain and silverware made the only sounds.

Maxy felt the night's cold. The scrub mimicked the sullenness that pervaded the cafe; the dark mood crept up on Maxy and stood by the door—it crowded in from the trees and crouched on the clay around the steps. Maxy rose and retreated inside.

"Them kids, they bring me nuthin' but troubles, plenty of troubles."

The road crew left the stew half finished, and though Burta hadn't seemed happy with them there, she feared their leaving. She pleaded with her large white eyes as she watched them go, but only Maxy saw. They left quickly, fleeing from the mood that had gripped the place, and the guard, who usually lingered at the door to talk, only smiled at Maxy as he stepped outside, hurrying the men into the back of the truck. The engine of the ancient vehicle banged and rattled slowly, then fell into a regular cadence. The truck turned onto the road, down towards the work farm at Calahatchie Springs.

Maxy, who had stood by the door to see them go, sat down at the nearest table. Burta brought his coffee over, the cup rattling against the saucer, the coffee showing the vibrations on its rippled surface. He fixed his eyes on her face but she turned away. "I can't forget them Mista Monroe. What are they

fixin' to do to me?" Maxy slowly inhaled his coffee, the sucking noise was loud, in the quiet room.

"I heard—down at the Springs—they done Derky's cousin. He told me . . ."

"Hush up Burta! Just leave offa what Derk told you. Them boys ain't like that" Burta wiped her sweating hands on her apron. "I been raisin' kids all my life honey. I know." The old man rose and put his arm around her.

"My youngest—he's just the age of . . ."

"You don't know him no more." Burta pushed away from him. "Why you get them white boys the liquor?"

A large rumbling shattered the silence left by the unanswered question—it tumbled through the open door and filled the room. Burta retreated to the table with the half-filled pot of stew on it and began stacking the dishes; she was thankful the noise had smothered her question.

A truck rolled off the pike and pulled into the gravel lot. The noise of its engine ceased abruptly, left a ringing in Maxy's ears that made the sudden silence more empty than it was. The driver stepped through the door, smiled at Maxy's expressionless face and sat down at the table. No one asked him what he wanted.

"How 'bout a cup of coffee, ma'am. Just bring the pot over." Burta brought an empty cup and the coffee pot to the table and set them down heavily. She didn't pour it out for him. Maxy watched Burta closely. Her gaze was fixed on the driver, who blew on his coffee.

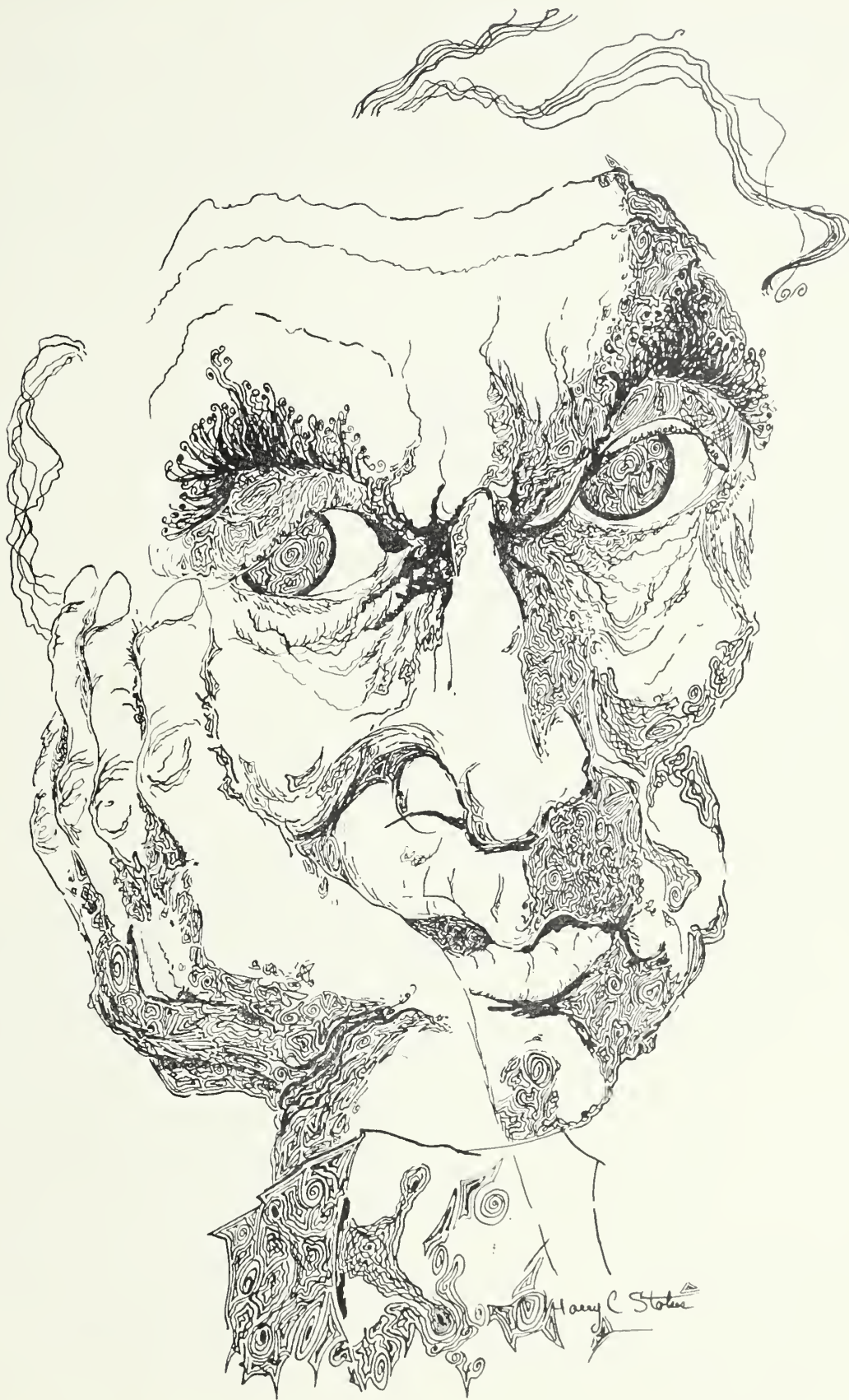
"How 'bout somethin' to eat. I smell some stew cookin'."

"We ain't got none," Burta snapped. Maxy, startled, raised his hand in protest, but he saw the hatred in her stare.

The driver finished his coffee quickly. One cup. He slapped a coin on the table, and without saying another word to Maxy or Burta, left the room. Maxy watched the driver tread across the gravel that appeared white in the moonlight—heard him grumble: "Goddam niggers—never did a man a fair turn."

Maxy could feel her hate. And he was ashamed, as he stared out across the gravel lot—ashamed as he thought of the trembling girl that stood behind him.

"Them kids, they bring me nothin' but troubles." He made ready to close his place for the night.



William Woodward

Down in the Darkness

down in the darkness
not touching
 wondering past
wandering
as two children weep
gaily merrily mournings of
 morning the newness
that is found lost we so
beginning shall have
 for a last
a star
and other children tinsel christmas trees
hymns of mass
toy balloons
 we, falter follow fall
snow dies white transparent on
a glove
our voices caroling
a silence inn
 love



To be Cold a Long Time

Far away, past red river banks and templed trees, in the last of waiting days, she walked toward me laughing and I could see her face summer-sun tanned and eyes windy wild and soft—she walked alone, toward me laughing with her hair blowing around her head like a veil—it was like turning a last summer hazy corner and there beyond dunes and houses, the sea, melting blue, with a shrimp boat sailing on the far edge, glistened. There she was in the final green-leaf-falling forest by the slow southern river and stepping toward me, smiling still, all her ancient, gloried beauty, her turning hands, quick thrown hair and berry brown legs shimmered and all others trailed deep green into shadow, swiftly gone, un-called as she, soft words holding, golden eye touching wound toward me.

The river, cold even in summer, fed by prehistoric, only Indian seen mountain springs touched my feet and I lay back on the dark plant-fed earth and looking upward tried to lose it all in the mobile clouds and sky. But, the broad, green leaves broke the blue and I could not catch the forever expanse of vaulted sky because the leaves were sycamore and I knew she loved those trees, remembering the first time I took her home with me to show her off because she was beautiful. That day, though the sun was shining very brightly and it was a Georgia April, the air was cold with the sycamores barely golden, their new leaves all shriveled and small like broken crowns. The ones along the road were white without the red clay road dust staining their sides. In the summer, with no rain and the cotton thriving, the hot dust that hung in the

air for half an hour after a car passed, would cover their bark and children would write messages on the trees as they did in winter after breathing on a cold car window.

We drove up the lane, silently caught in each others thoughts and looking at her face I knew she loved it all and the willows just green against the bare mud bank. My father had always loved long drive-ways and when he was old enough and rich enough he built a house by a dark stream and the driveway was long, beautiful and leaf strewn, so long that on a summer day with all the field covering green, the sky, before the last bend became only one long, frayed strip ahead and behind. Then around the final light filtering curve and there amid the wisteria and gentle oaks was the house, a yellow mansion alone and cool, just stepping out of moss-hung woods and we stopped in the dipping light to hold everything for the first time, with the sound of the wind as it blew down through the shadows of the sycamores, past the skeletons of flowers and out across the new fields.

For those few days, fast turning hours filled with laughter and little loneliness, we wandered together through a silent slow movie and I could sit in wicker chairs and sip my summer drink, talking to an aging vacant smiling father and watch her as she ran through slender grass with happy cousins and tumbling, laughing dogs and early, golden leaves. There was joy in a decaying house among a withered family, in the forever world of drifting days and long walks by gentle currents, losing time in dark reflections of water light.



On sunny days we would drive the ninety miles down through mossy live oak forests to the Gulf and walk alone, hand in hand past gray driftwood, sucked dry by countless tides and sword grass glades cut by brackish, rusty streams. The fiddler crabs, white flecked cowards scurried into sandy holes and she would run after them until each raced in his agile sideways way back to gritty safety. Standing alone on a wave washed headland we would watch the gulls on some off shore bar—she would raise her hand to the sun and sky and the birds as if her lifting arm were a sign, would leave the bar, circling above it, wheeling, drifting slow and high, and fly away.

We would drive back up the beach road, past summer houses with their flat roofs and oyster shell driveways to Barter's Inlet and Sweeney's Lodge where in screened, mosquito sung twilight, we could eat fresh Gulf soft shell crab and over the always last bottle of dark, sweet Jamacia rum talk to captain Frank Abernathy about earlier times when the Gulf shrimp business was really good and the end of the days of the strong man and small boat was not so near. Then the long night ride back past bent tobacco rows and darkened cabins, through the moon haze and mist toward darkly green fields and soft light in shaded windows.

Those days were gone—not faded away or gradually slipped into some other stuccoed world, but just no longer the present—now was me on the bank, close heart thumping, watching her, feeling the lightening folds of her dress, waiting as she stopped to talk to old friends, still smiling, like a forever dream of draping lace and half-lidded looks, slowly moving like an ed-died leaf toward me. Yet I was the one who had been away, scratching my life across a foreign continent, having to be free of conventional binds, sitting Hemingway style in open cafes all morning trying to find the meaningful words, feeling nothing but the misery of an unexpected winter drab and missing her, waiting for letters that I picked up at a friends home because as a careless wanderer I surely never knew where I would be. She would write often and tell me of her life and the new times, so strange and so far.

Dear Ramblen,

The days are long here still, but autumn must be on the way because the sunsets are redder now and the cold seems to come sooner every night. We have been partying every day for a week now. Hodge tore down the screen door to the porch last night and the afternoon before, Rick and Brooks were wrestling on the lawn and something happened to Rick's legs be-

cause he couldn't move them, he just lay there and said, "Help, I can't move my legs," and then he started to cry and we were scared and Hodge cut his foot on some broken glass when he went into the house to call an ambulance and then everything was sad because the men came and got Rick into a stretcher and took him away and we watched them from the yard as they turned the corner with the ambulance making that funny noise, not like a siren but like a robot person would cry, and all the leaves in the street and the dark coming on. We all got into Hodge's car to follow them and Brooks rode the whole way to the hospital on the hood until Nancy threatened to get out unless Hodge stopped and made him get in. We couldn't see Rick and there was no word so we left and went to the Ship Ahoy bar and Brooks got into a real old-fashioned barroom brawl and lost a tooth and Swoopster got a black eye trying to help him. Then we left because Sally was crying and the manager threw us out. I went home and almost everyone else did too, except Hodge and Swoopster who wanted to keep drinking. And all these days should be a beautiful time because there is so much here and not just all the people whom I love or the freedom, but greater—the place and the time in young years when within all the irresponsibility I know there is something inside of me, breathing it in, so that in these hard worn, easy fallen days I am learning where to be with myself. Yet still, It seems I am stretching, not so I can reach something to understand, but too tightly, in a world and life too small to matter. Rick's father said, when we met him at the hospital, that it was sad when all of this, the drinking and every day another green lawn, red riding play, became commonplace. And I don't know whether he is right or not. . . .

She would go on for many more pages, but that was not important because always, in those few young, slowfound sentences were the words I needed to be saying to her because France and dark canals and jonquil fields did not make me and my time different—her feelings were in me, not because we were alike or in love, but because we were young at the same time and the same faces had to be our own. Instead, I wrote her back half pages of one eye to the world perverted ramblings and childish poems.

Dear Hannah,

I pass through streets of gray and dying air toward towers of glistening glass reflecting still pools, half frozen in this dim and damn and fading light. In a wandering world of ordure this small child walks aimlessly between forest and field toward a small and

lonely pond, dark shadows shifting in a noiseless wind. To one who always knows and never does I scream your name and you laugh and say turn over. Where are the women, girls and maybe boys I knew yesterday and the wonderful fecundity of an oscillating imagination treading the path of wonder and maybe love. And you look at me with your 37 mm eyes and I turn away with a smile but really hurt and the laugh I have cannot save the face I want. I often wonder/ If some loving parent/ In ribbons of pressed collars/ Gave to me/ This gift of self/ To wear/ Instead of be. The green is overpowering and I sit in splendor of dew grazed grass while your name, like a shadow, covers all.

But, those letters and words and frozen white-faced thoughts were gone—tossed into some velvet covered grandmother box like plastic fruit—Not wilted or decayed or dead just boring constant, no longer pretty or deceiving. And it seemed I would never have to watch her again or look hard because she was the soft onlap, lap of a quiet and summer sea, flowing with her words and face toward and around my mind and I looked up into those forgotten eyes and laughed with a sailors scurvied heart.

Once when we were younger, a former boyfriend of hers gave me two weeks either to make her happy or prepare for a beating. At the end of the period he cornered me by the back steps of my house and without listening to my time planned arguments or pleas thrashed me until I cried. He was older than me by several years and stronger, a boxer I think on some prep school team and as I lay there holding on to the brick steps, choking with tears and anger, my mind yelled at him, “You have the body of a man, but your soul is lost in the humdrum, mismoronic tantrum of idiocy. You could never feel what love is and your heart is too still to be pittied.” He could not hear though for he kicked me, once, hard in the small of the back, turned without speaking and walked away.

On a river bank, primeval slaughterous younger man sits and listens, silent in depth of forest and dark of river. Slowly and far, like summer thunder, hand held outside my window it comes—wait and smile. Crouch like tortured, thinking tiger. Break you winds—never twist and never touch. Stop—with just one word. And I look into her eyes, alone and lost, waiting to say hello.



Poem

Bending
 turning
pressing bluffs built on generations of silt,
the river
drives
 to the sea.

Fruit
ripens
in overturned soil;
waterlilies choke
in the mud.

Limbs fall off traditions
of trees
 and
 DAM
 the waters' flight.

Digging rifts into valleys,
the river divides hills.
Bent

 willows shake
cotton fists
at intruding streams.

Roots,
warm in bed,
settle
beneath waters' rush.
But spring brings floods
to strip off
 winter blankets.

Anne Mize

Sylvan Armies

Free us from dripping death,
The sapping flow from slashes cut in vain
In verdant veins fermenting fervent innocence.
The vigor of our love forbids mortality
To gather blood for another's balm,
For embalming.

Bev Cheeseman



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Gothic Bookshop

AD INDEX

Duke Barber Shop	32
Duke Dining Halls	2
Duke Press	2nd cover
Duke Stores	31
Gothic Book Shop	2
Ivy Room	2
Jack Rabbit Laundry	2
Sascha	2
Seeman Printery	3rd cover
West Side Pharmacy	32

Duke University Barber Shop

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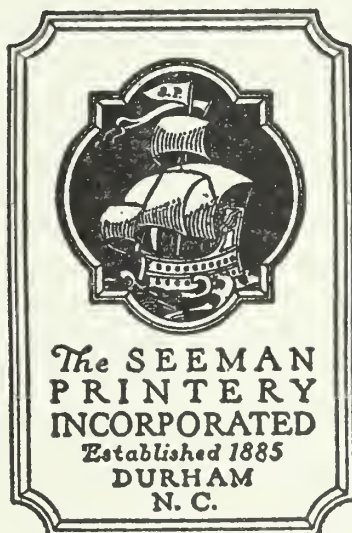


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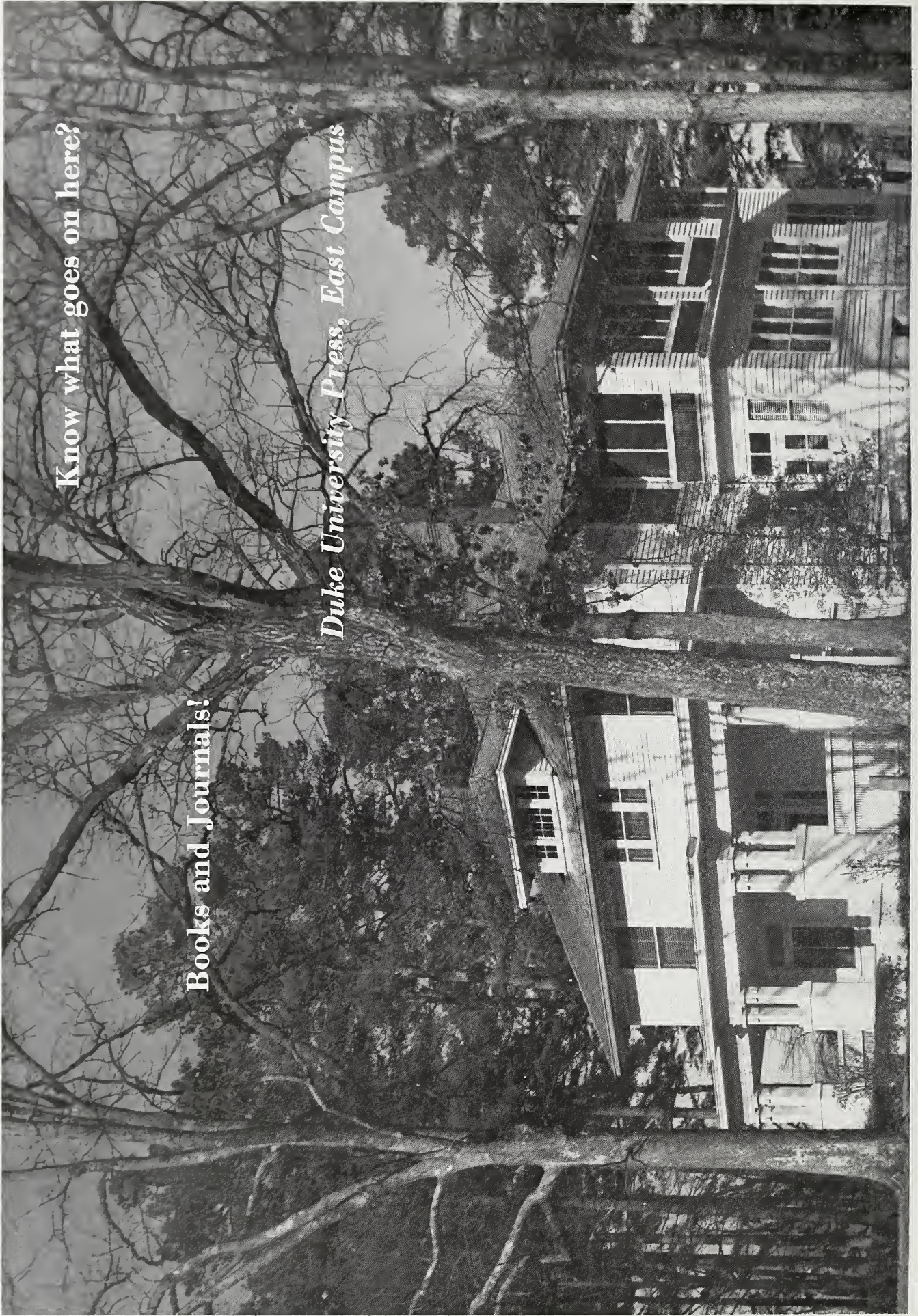
THE ARCHIVE

April 1968

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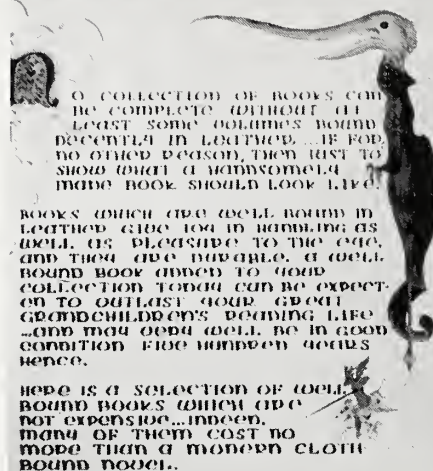
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The Archive Literary Arts Festival

The annual Literary Arts festival will be held from Saturday, April 20, through Tuesday, April 23. Mr. Robert Lowell and Mr. John Knowles will be on the Duke Campus during this period.

Mr. Lowell is possibly the leading poet in America today. He is a native of Boston, who has studied at Harvard University and Kenyon College. In 1947 he received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his *Lord Weary's Castle*. His other writings include: *Land of Unlikeness*, *For the Union Dead*, *Imitations*, *Phaedra* (a translation), *The Old Glory* (three plays), *Life Studies*, *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*, and *Near the Ocean*. He has also served as consultant in poetry in English to the Library of Congress. Mr. Lowell now lives in New York City.

Mr. Knowles is the author of the best-selling novel,

A Separate Peace. He was born in West Virginia and educated at the Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale. He served for three years as an associate editor of *Holiday Magazine*. His writings include, besides *A Separate Peace* for which he won the William Faulkner Foundation Award and the Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters: *Morning In Antibes*, and *Indian Summer*. He is currently teaching at Princeton University and living in New York City.

Mr. Knowles will give a public reading from his works Sunday, April 21.

Mr. Lowell will read from his poetry Monday, April 22.

Both readings will be held in the East Duke Music Room at 8:00 P.M.

Admission is free.



Cover by Larry Funk

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Editor: C. O. Smith; *Poetry Editors:* David Moffett, Art McTighe; *Art Editors:* Lee Caplin, Linda Pannill; *Assistants:* Kathy Christy, Larry Funk, Pamela Roberts, Sean Devereux, Bill KcKinnon

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The Archive

Is looking for fiction, poetry, art work, essays, photographs and feature articles. All work must be of high quality. Submissions should be made to room 301 Flowers Building, or mailed to Box 4665, Duke Station.

Deadline for the May issue is April 10

THE ARCHIVE

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CONTENTS

STORIES

The Garden	7
by Kaki Humphreys	
Five O'Clock	23
by Susan Walker	
Homeward	27
by Jubal Early	

POEMS

Poem	11
by Anne Mize	
Altitudes	12
by David Moffett	
Poem	13
by Steven Davies	
Polish Poem #1	14
by H. P. Morgan	
Leave Taking	16
by Chamblee Owen	
To Possession of Black Beauty	21
by H. W. Hutchinson III	
black blues	22
by Art McTighe	
Waiting	25
by Anne Mize	
Poem	25
by Susan Hills	

PHOTOGRAPHS

Seascape	17
by Steve Karver	
Spiders	18-20
by Larry Funk	
Indian Beach	26
by Larry Funk	

ARTWORK

Head	6
by Linda Pannill	
Standing Figure	11
by Marsha Peterson	
Face	15
by Marsha Peterson	

Published quarterly September, December, March and May by the students of Duke University.

The publication of articles on controversial topics does not necessarily mean that the Editor or the University endorses them. The names and descriptions of all characters in the fiction of this magazine are fictitious. Any resemblance to any person or persons is not intended and is purely coincidental.



The Garden

Timothy Blake sat on the garden bench in his Sunday clothes. The party was to begin at eight, but Sienna had had to dress him by seven so she could help in the kitchen. "Doan ruffle them Sunday bests, chile," she'd warned. "And doan mess in the garden. Sit on that bench like a gentleman til I call." And now he was to wait until eight, alone with nothing to do but count the stars coming out, and wish on the first. The wool of his trousers scratched his legs, and seemed to rub no matter how he sat.

The garden lay before him, calling to him to ramble among the viney paths and smell the tea olive that stole only hintingly as far as the bench where he sat. Darkness veiled the azalea beds from him, and the mossy brickwork that channelled through ivy tunnels to the road. But the path was lit with kerosene torches, a string of bright eyes stretching up to the house, as if stars had fallen, and smoldered in black receptacles, to lead the guests in.

Before the first arrived he would be summoned to take his stand inside, to greet them and take the ladies' coats, and smile at perfumed, wrinkled faces. He breathed the garden air with his whole strength, in preparation for the effort he must make not to disappear until the last guest had come, and shook his hand or kissed his cheek, and been taken away into the living room by his mother—like so many cars on a train that whistle to you as they pass, and then are gone before you can distinguish between them.

The marble bench pressed against him, cold and rigid; he didn't dare divide himself from it, to visit even the nearest reaches of the garden. Sienna would surely call just as the darkness took him, and find a hair out of place or knot his tie closer, and maybe not let him sneak off so soon from the party. Timothy swung his legs, letting the heels of his shoes thump on the marble stone, inching room at the front for his toes to breathe.

The night held unformed images beyond his sense of sight and smell; he could feel them hovering beyond him, naked to themselves alone, clothed to the perceiver. In nightmares the world is indistinct, diffuse, with maybe only a scent half-caught on the wind of the mind, to lead you back to the dream when you awaken. The boy caught such a scent, breathed from the tea

olive and azaleas, indistinct, but hinting and hinting of something other than itself. For a moment he thought of his father, the great laughing face of his father, and how it came to life only at special times, like a light that blinks golden and warm, and then is gone. A vein in his neck pulsed beneath the starched collar, pumping for release, drumming, and Lisa's low voice emerged from the twiney darkness of the garden, calling his name.

She appeared beside him, her arms laden with camellias, all red, deep stained against the glistening white of her dress. The light from the porch swept out as far as the bench, and took her in with the boy.

"How are you this evening?" Her red lips, struck from the white of her face, echoed the flowers in her arms. Timothy was attracted and repelled at once, like men before the glancing beauty of a snake.

"Fine thankyou Mam." He held to the marble bench.

"Tim you don't have to call me Mam. Call me Aunt Lisa, I'm your cousin, you know."

"Ycs Mam."

"Timothy Blake." Sienna's voice trumpeted across the light space to the boy and woman, as if on signal to stop the unformed protest from Lisa's lips.

"Coming Sienna." Timothy nodded to Lisa, excusing himself, preferring even the ordeal at the door to this in the garden, alone with his mysterious grown-up cousin, who seemed to have adopted his family as her own for the summer.

On the porch Sienna absorbed him in her wild, peculiar care, investigating his self and costume as if he were her special entry for a contest just beginning. Her hands swept over the small dark coat, picking lint, positioning buttons precisely in holes, touching imperceptively, then racing on.

"What's she tellin in yoah ear?"

"Who?" Timothy glanced over his shoulder to see if Lisa were following.

"You know who chile. Doan gimme dat. They's things I know."

Lisa still stood by the bench, where the light met the darkness. Timothy's father had joined her, with sprays of tea olive and greens. His face caught the light from the house; it was ruddy and gay.

"Lord, Miss Bonnie goin to die. Come on in chile. I've got work to do. This fambly aine fit for such goings on." Timothy pulled away from her covering hands and ducked inside. If Lisa spoke to him later, he would walk away. Sienna would be on his side, he knew. He didn't have to take her smiling all over him and singing in her throat, like she did for his father.

Inside the hall was dark, even more than in the garden by the bench. He could hide in the corner and go unnoticed, so he wouldn't have to carry plates of olives and shrimp for Sienna or see his mother. He merged with the shadows at the foot of the stairway, as Sienna passed by, drawing a great whiff of soap and starch in her wake. Glasses touched and clinked in the kitchen, being arranged on trays by black hands; a light clicked on in the hall upstairs.

"Timothy come zip me up. Sienna hasn't come up here once, and I don't have the strength to call that woman. You'll have to do."

The boy climbed the steps slowly; he should have gone with Sienna to the kitchen. Now there would be the questions, the queer looks, complaints.

Bonnie Blake had returned to her dressing room by the time he reached the second floor, and waited for him as if he were her personal servant. Everyone in the household was a servant to her, and to her unpredictable moods.

Timothy entered and approached his mother shyly, sickened by the odor of gardenias that suffused the room. When Sienna took the comforter out for cleaning, the smell tainted the whole house on the way down to the laundry. And when his mother ventured out, she locked the room, as if to keep the scent dried and pressed within. Her face was yellowish like wax of old candles; Timothy wished she wouldn't smile, because then it melted all together and the flesh quivered into unnatural shapes.

"I was watching you from the window Timothy."

"Yes Mam." His hands hung limply at his sides, and damp. She didn't like them to be held behind his back or in his pockets or anywhere comfortable.

"Who was that with you?"

"No one." The boy edged backwards toward the door.

"Come here and look for yourself." She pulled back the organdy curtain, that seemed on the verge of crumbling into dust, and peered down into the garden. Timothy marched to her side, and forced himself to focus on the white bench below. No one was there, only the red-gold eyes of the torches streaming off on either side of the path into darkness.

"I don't see anyone, Mam."

His mother burst into laughter; he grinned with

her, but only with his lips, like his father. Then as abruptly she stopped, and turned her back to him.

"Zip me up." He obeyed, familiar with the task, the tiny silver teeth of the zipper folding the black silk across his mother's back. Sienna had showed him how to slip his finger between the zipper and the skin, so the splotched flesh could not be caught and pinched. His fingers trembled with the slick material, moistening it in spots with a darker stain.

"Come on, hurry up child." On tiptoe he eased the top hook-and-eye into place. She straightened herself back to the usual rigid posture. Timothy thought she must wear a brace to keep the backbone so upright; Sienna always said they would put him in a brace if he slumped at the table.

"Am I all fixed?" She twirled about for his approval. The thick smell of gardenia flew outward from her shapeless body, that mimicked a gay dance step of her youth like an old caravel horse reduced to dull wood where bright paint had been. Prespiration rose on his body beneath the harsh wool of his trousers, and underneath the collar.

"Yes Mam." Then he took his exit, for his mother was back at the window, and had forgotten him.

He drifted down the staircase and settled again in the shadows at the foot of the steps. The door was still open from when Sienna had swept through. He felt her presence in the faint soapy smell that edged the woodwork she had scrubbed, and in his own starched collar. Through the door he could see his father with Lisa; they were pretending to be guests. His father loved to play games, especially with Timothy. But that was before Lisa had come, and stolen the summer from him, and flattered his father into years he had forgotten. They acted out their parts in the porch light, like on a tiny stage that would be transformed into an ordinary porch, on an ordinary summer's evening, when they were gone.

"Madame, may I have the honor of this dance?" He bowed to her as if she were a princess.

"Why thank you, Sir. I don't mind if you do." With the red camellias still cradled in her arms, she curtsied back to him, like the china ballerina on Bonnie's mantel, that held its skirts in either hand, and bobbed back and forth when you touched it. Peter Blake whistled an old waltz melody, thinking of when he was young, and courting Bonnie, and she had been as beautiful as Lisa. The smilax vines wound about the white cloth of his dinner jacket; his hands rustled within them, to disentangle and lay them aside. Timothy closed his eyes to see his father so gay with her, his own father who used to carry him on his shoulders down the path each evening to shut the gate for the night.

"Madame, let me take your arm instead, and we two together shall deck the gloomy halls."

Timothy sat quickly on the bottom step, pretending to tie his shoe. The light from his father's face evaporated as he entered the dark hall. A certain dryness about the house drained it away from him, and the sight of his wife descending the stairs above his son.

"Timothy, what are you doing huddled there in the dark?" She bristled by him, the dead smell of gardenia whispering in folds of silk.

"Good evening, Peter." Lisa removed her arm from his.

"We've been gathering flowers and greens for the party, Aunt Bonnie." She held out the camellias, like a child, for her to see.

"Nasty things. No fragrance." She clicked on the light switch flooding the entry-way with a harsh glare.

"There, that's better. Peter, you know I had flowers sent over from Elza's for the evening."

"Yes, dear, it was childish of us." He dropped the smilax on the table beside him. Timothy watched him draw the composed, obedient expression over his face, and heard the usual comment.

"Well, who's for a little drink?"

"Nothing for me, Peter. I'll wait for the guests, of course." She smiled blandly at Lisa. "Let the children take these things out to the kitchen; Sienna can do something with them, I suppose."

Timothy gathered his father's tea olive and greens, more he thought than they could ever use in one night. Peter started for the living room, where the drinks were set up, resigned to the fact that his wife would not retire for another hour, the hour allotted for entertainment. He would have to carry on after the guests left, or all the drinks were gone.

Lisa started to follow Timothy to the kitchen, but hesitated for a moment. "Would you like a camellia for your hair?" Timothy waited on the threshold to the pantry. He could hear Sienna's rich grumblings from the kitchen, like the first signs of a storm in the distance.

His mother turned on the girl, and would have scolded for her presumption, but she hitched up short, like a needle that jumps on a record's groove, and came down in another mood. "I used to wear flowers in my hair when I was younger. Any kind of flower—roses, jasmine. My hair was black as yours too, only I wore it high on my head." She reached up to where the hair had been piled. If she cried Timothy would have to call Sienna. He prepared for the worst.

"I think your hair is quite becoming now." Lisa smiled, seeming to understand.

"What do you know about anything?" His mother's

voice crashed through the hall, like the break of a storm that comes on you of a sudden, and catches you off guard, no matter how hard you've prepared.

Lisa skipped backwards towards the pantry. "I'm sorry Mam. I'd better put these things in water." Timothy was glad she'd been put down. His mother was a real fighter sometimes.

In the kitchen Sienna looked up from cutting biscuits.

"What you done to Bonnie chile?"

"Nothing." Timothy dumped the greens in the sink. The old Negro woman glared at Lisa.

"What you bringin that truck in heah for?"

"We thought you could put them in water. Mr. Peter says . . ."

"I doan take no orders from Mr. Peter. I've known he since before you was born chile."

"Yes Mame." Timothy smiled to himself. It must hurt a grownup like Lisa to say Yes Mame to Sienna.

"Them guest'll be comin in any time now. Timothy honey get out to the doah, and doan forget to say good ebbing."

When Timothy got back to his station, a couple was at the door. He let them in and took the lady's coat. His mother met them at the entrance to the living room, and the train began. He didn't remember faces; they piled up in his mind like so many of Sienna's hot-cakes on a plate. He thought they all must know what everyone was going to wear, they looked so alike. Once a man tried to slip by with a cigar, but Bonnie caught him before the living room.

"No you don't, Dr. Paul."

His wife bustled apologetically past him as he ground out the fat butt in an ashtray. "I told him not to, Bonnie. You know how men are."

The cigar left an awful odor in the hall. Timothy contemplated ejecting it over the porch bannister. But then the guests kept coming, and he was forced to smell it for the rest of the time. Sienna came once to check on him. She'd never seen such goings on, she said, and Lisa had all the husbands in a ring around her like a puppet show. And Mr. Peter would sure have a head to treat in the morning.

The one good thing about being door-man is that it comes all at once and then is over. The last guests rushed in like the benediction in church. Timothy loosened his tie the minute they were absorbed into the living room. He peeked in after them, not daring to enter for fear his mother would catch him, and show him around, as if everyone hadn't seen him at the door and not cared who he was. His father leaned on the mantel beside his mother, drinking, and smiling. But it was his special party smile, and not at all the

one that lit his face to bursting. His mother was eating shrimp Sienna passed around. The tiny bit of pink wandered toward her thin lips and disappeared primly in the mouth. Lisa was drinking, too. Her cheeks bloomed rosy against the black hair. He could not imagine his mother ever looking so beautiful, though everyone, even Sienna, said it was so. The red camellia in her hair had slipped just enough to make you hope it wouldn't fall, but stay always right on the verge. Then she saw him, and before he could escape, she cornered him in the hall.

"Tim you must be starved. Here have a shrimp." She popped one into his mouth and slid the toothpick out between his teeth.

"Not bad is it? I just wanted to tell you how much I like you and I know you think I'm odd and little boys don't like girls, but I just had to say it. I'm a little drunk maybe."

Timothy shrunk away from her against the staircase, horrified that she was saying these things to him. The guest who was nearest looked over with a grin.

"You know what I'd do if a pretty girl said that to me?"

Timothy shook his head.

"I'd take her for a stroll in the garden." Several guests joined in the laughter; Timothy felt his face turn red, thinking of his disjointed tie, and of how his mother must be watching.

Lisa grew rosier than ever from laughing with the others. "I think I will just take a bit of fresh air." She walked out to the porch fanning her face with her hand, while Timothy sat on the bottom step, pretending to fall asleep.

"It's cool out here, Tim. Want to go for a stroll?" She tossed the question back to him through the door, but he let it drop unanswered at his feet.

"Don't you answer your cousin when she speaks to you, young man?" His mother had slipped up unheard. "You two were causing quite a commotion at the party."

"I was almost asleep."

"That's my boy. Takes after me." She spoke loud enough for Lisa to hear, but she gazed on at the night.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself, Miss Lisa."

"Yes Mam, very much."

"I've told everyone you'll be leaving tomorrow."

Timothy looked at his mother to see what she could mean, but Lisa did not move.

"You agree with me don't you, Lisa?"

She turned to face her then, and tears lay on the bottom rims of her eyes, but didn't fall, like cups that are too full, but hold the liquid on the brink of spilling.

"Yes Aunt Bonnie, but I wish you'd told me sooner."

"Why child, what on earth for? You can pack tonight. I thought you'd be pleased to discover I'd planned this party as a going-away affair. No one ever appreciates the things I do for them."

Timothy agreed with his mother. If Lisa wasn't grateful, he was. After she was gone his father would play again with him.

"I shall see you in the morning before you go." She turned and climbed the stairs, having done her duty by her guests, and by her niece.

Now that she was leaving Timothy felt he should say something nice. "Lisa, I'll go for a stroll with you, if you want."

She looked much younger with the tears. Timothy had not cried in ever so long. It wasn't proper, Sienna said, for young men to cry, especially not in public.

"Go see if your father can come away, Tim. I'd like to tell him goodbye."

Timothy hesitated before the errand; he had only wanted to step out to the bench, until she was calmer. But to go back in the room was more than he was willing to do for her, and to get his father, his own father, who must be all his own, now that she was leaving . . .

"Come on Tim, you'll have him the rest of your life, and I have to go tomorrow."

Timothy leaned over from the step and untied his shoe-lace. Grown-ups were odd; one minute they were gay, the next minute they cried, like his mother did sometimes, over little things not worth the trouble. He would wait for her to ask again. Then he would get him, but only when he decided it should be.

"Timothy I can't go in there like this. I can't."

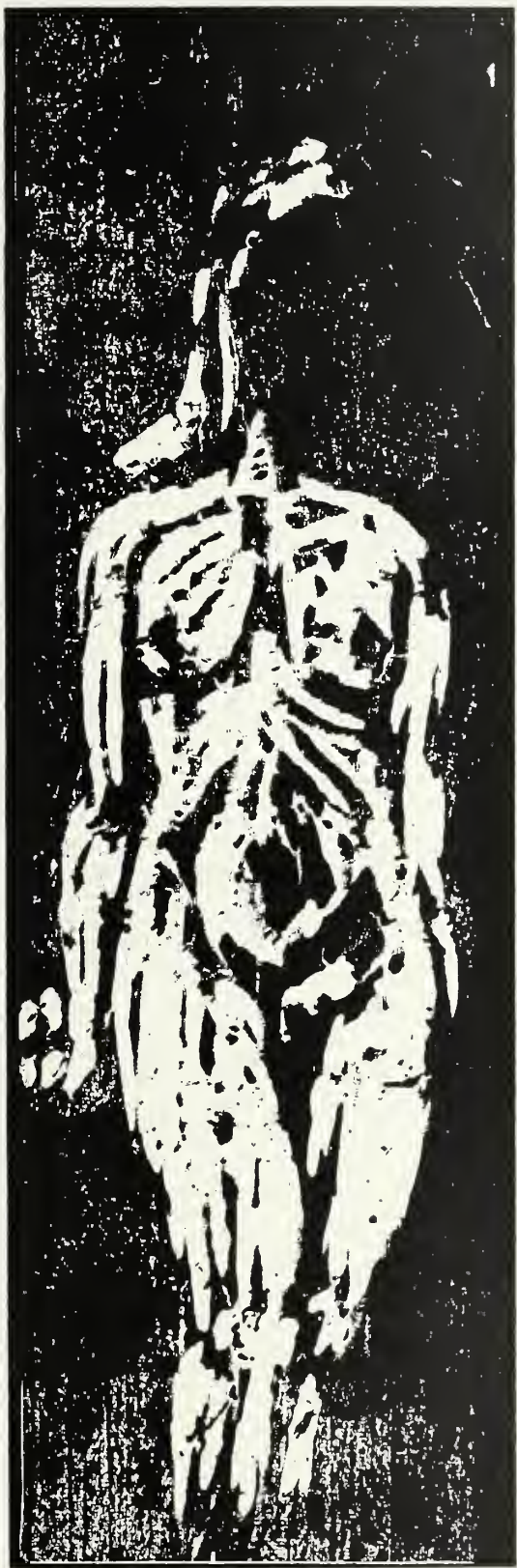
"O.K. Just let me tie this shoe."

For a moment, as he tied the black laces, he thought of what his father might say. He might go to his mother in the closed room and make her see that Lisa must not go. But his mother was right. His father would have to agree. He tied his tie in place, even tighter than Sienna fixed it, and fortified with his mother's decision, entered the living room.

Peter Blake stood alone on the other side of the room. His glass hung at an angle from his hand. He was waiting for the end, like a man falling back asleep to catch the end of a dream. After Bonnie retired the guests usually filtered away, shaking his hand for parting, commenting on the food or flowers, the florist's flowers that decked the room; they would be dead tomorrow.

Timothy approached him from the side. Of a sud-

(Continued on page 31)



Anne Mize

Poem

Scratches of ink on virgin sheets—
a mere touch
on the surface
of blood
to flow, is flowing

is flowing

in colors—in reds/ in
gold. And my
blue
on a canvas sky,
dripping/ oil dripping
to a river below
flowing/ is flowing

to the pulse of a blood—
stream/ the creator—
his baton rising
falling
stop,
he will never stop.

It is finished:
everything has begun.

David Moffett

Altitudes

I

The wind at the doorway is the voice of a woman you cannot embrace,
The sirocco an electric rage in the deserted street,
A torrent of remote pains under an awning sky.
Today the milk was blue, the fishermen found serpents in their nets,
And even the gardener, killing moles,
Unearthed a stone not to be thought of,
An amulet, he crouches
And it is hidden under his heart.

II

The lines we live are too various,
An infinity of divergence in bleak and white and
Planes are compressed on planes until
It is an agony to step outdoors—
A mouse awakening in a maniac's fist.
But it is not from breathing this air
Which tears without a sound,
Not from this vapor, which has touched
Lowland bare arms, which
Somewhere falls beyond time plashing in
The moss-shaded courts of the patient,
The fertility of ignorance.
That small earnest man who seized your arm
By mistake two years ago a summer in Montenegro:
You owe him a debt—he died without relations,
Buried by roots,
The trees have lived him away;
He has entered the air.
You breathe and do not remember.

At these altitudes
 The plasticity of flesh is an ardure; nothing
 Rank increases, the people are worn stones,
 An ice frond on the morning window as we wake
 Makes a live ideal that
 Haunts the skulls of climbers at the treeline,
 The bare adamant recitude being
 Not what you expected, nor
 Even what you most dread,
 But a bass note in the ground,
 A precipice of imagination that finally estranges
 Letters forwarded on from bitter origins
 To certain way-station towns where we walked alien
 And drunk with the air,
 But were chimerical, half-transformed,
 Almost convinced that these hands, winebloom hands,
 harpsichord hands, abstract, graven, suppliant,
 That can handle the last sunlight in a twilight room,
 Are also
 finally
 our hands.

Steven Davies

Poem

Kyrie Eleison! Thrice Kyrie Thrice!
 Meteor, spun in flames, to ask.
 Gown of frail ash, gown of silence!
 Army upon army marching army upon army
 Oh! Cold wheat trampled, silent gold looted.
 And twice looted! Gain? No Gain? Gain?
 And I? Water bread sleep and awaken.
 To go (spin in flames) to stay (marching, marching)
 Skeleton, unlettered page, solid smoke. Brown leaf
 From tree to gutter to gutter to flame.
 Carried (mother wind) to float (mother water) to burn (mother fire)
 Cristie Eleison! Thrice Cristie! Thrice!

H. P. Morgan

Polish Poem #I

several sad little polish refugees singing hymns in a well-lit chapel. were well-lit little sad polish refugees peasants they, too for wine was not a stranger. to them it was not; it was a sacred holiday and being this day collected in gregarious nature manifestations, gathered around candles and huddled against the young virgins, maidens of playful polish descention. contemplation was with them and hymns sung praise, thanks and polish hossanahs—kyriani holini popeye's were abundant as they spoke to the mystical god of oracles, the sweet pious nature of simple, backwoods but vain and hard, toil was known for ages amid the ancient polish paters

who, in view of the young of their dead past; ancestors of illegitimate but indefinite lineage, memories flooded the pervasuve immaturity of several mad polish refugees, where in carefully on their humble knees caught in frenzy of religious evaluation only a polish peasant can remember, a voice:

sons and daughters a deep excruciating rosin-coated voice, thick with the beefy diligence and nature's endowment of sense of humours inherent in polish simpletons.

o mighty recall and unitiring devotion cried, several of these lovable victims of homeless and broken family. for the chapel was gleefully in flames, cracking the mosaics and patterned cut glass windows adorning the nave and startling communion with the holy polish dieties. such piety and insipid zeitgeist explosive in this same but well placed polish chapel

hahhh sighs rose in simultaneous and knives flashed as the playful polish children sang and fought in the aisles, nebulous of mad or angry older polish refugee parents whose concerned physiques were not in the least to be neglected condemn them if you will for lack of excitement as the coming of the festive season of the polish new year, provided a season of broken polish dreams.

sleighs mounted the prayer-ridden polish refugees as the long ride back to farms scattered all over the polish mountain side. dance was active stimulation, bonfires deeply rooted in polish tradition exploded and nearly destroyed the refugee peasants farms. gulping firewater, the night came in beautiful relaxation and surrender of phoebe, generous god-sun after warming the hearts of polish peasants, heroes and villains . . . beastly.

mad polish dogs ripped and tore the flesh of sad-eyed polish children caught in dancing urges around the hearth, fresh-cropped food was bubbling on the cold brick ovens lining the walls of polish thackeray-roofed huts. bubble bubble recoil at trouble went the centuries old treasure chest rhyme bespoke in quiet and dirty moments at midnight solitude walses in frothy and deliberate castration ceremonies. nowhere was the poet safe amid the hierachael polish social status, duplex and insane by goal-ridden and truthful norms.

hence was the story ended; polish heroism notwithstanding. pox qual reality as an old polish prince used to insist.



Chamblee Owen

Leave Taking

Beyond the poxied Sunday fields
On wings that spread or sing or bring
I watch toward hills as the bandit bangle
Passes unhunted away.
Show me an ocean with no horizon
And the beaten blue spreading forever;
for I have sung your canticle of houses, automobiles
and hare-lipped children
Sitting long in the deep rank silence
That lives under the branches of those live oaks,
And the waters that had been some arterial surge
over dusty legs,
Brightly,
Lie still again.
There was no matter
That in my arboreal sinewed youth the sculptured havens
disappeared
Past tears and parents care.
For on longer afternoons I waited in quiet,
Torn and rough;
But in that summer of leaving,
No love was love enough.









H. W. Hutchinson III

To Possession of Black Beauty

And it is dangerous to love blackness;
to be beautiful.

So springs the subfoliar panther,
shaded ancestrally
among familiar terraced shapes,
where the glitter of the fang serves
to trace and arc from perch to target.

And he is only black
on something less than black.

The assassin, properly attired,
will cradle the black handle
between the beginning of the wrist
and the ends of the fingers.

The edges,
set on spring and honed to gleam,
remain concealed, serene, until that moment
for the final movement.
Thus, to split the gloom, the blade reveals
a single curvature
in the flashing twists of neon signs.

Just as the prey beholds the coming
of the cunning executioner
who leaps from coil among familial leaves;
So at the last stroke of birth
can a man recoil to see the final figure
of a parabola with teeth.

Art McTighe

black blues

foxy old lady
big black bear whose argon eyes reach
beyond your ebony teeth;
nicotine laughing recalling
a little black whore
her lips materializing moon skin
 echoes shine
spade happening in my crotch;

urine gold phosphates growing in
evanescent gasps why
little black crystal lover?
kiss my face; whose?

the men slowly wait on the bowling
green
taking the alcohol window apart,
seeing
furmind resting and she
genuflects and
brings
her bottle trumpet meaning
to exorcise my
temperate temperature
and temper from her light switch
siren:
my temper

our gifted raisens and a black cat bone
of boo hoo mystics'
mistaken stylus her mushroom
cunt and fullness of water
graveyard
junk trains in
postage lozenges/

Five O'Clock

The boy lay behind a bush in the lot back of his house eyeing intently the kitchen door from which he had just flung himself in what he imagined to be a mad escape. No movement from within was discernible. He was terrifically aware that all his muscles were straining to a degree unwarranted by his short run and were now giving unpredictable little jumps which made it difficult for him to balance his arched body with his forearm and the knee he had braced against a rock. He was surprised, though, that he seemed to be able to extend the moment of his precarious crouching indefinitely, as though he had curiously acquired a magically accommodating sort of will power. Joy surged through him as it became obvious that no one had seen him and no one was going to come to the door and tiredly utter the necessary command that he come back in and clean the fish his father had caught that day. He had, in his superior knowledge of the distractions and other things which had to be attended to in the household, chosen exactly the right moment to escape.

His vigil of the ominous dark rectangles that were the kitchen door and windows completed, he rose stiffly and was amazed that he could present his back calmly to the house as he wound his way with a rash deliberateness through the clutter of the yard to the encircling thicket of small trees. The combined odors, however, of bait which his father had left behind in rusty cans early that morning and of a pile of painted, half-rotten boards which they had collected to build a lean-to sent him into an awkward little run which marked the end of his visibility from the house.

In the thicket, the late afternoon sunlight was so filtered by the dense interweaving of branches that seeing the sun itself was impossible. Bitter yellow light struck odd objects that were suspended in the undergrowth—a beetle crawling across a leaf, a piece of livid, purple bark dangling in a spider web. They seemed funny bits spotlighted for his attention like the freaks of nature displayed in a penny arcade he had been in once.

A smile rose to his lips as he had to use his hands more and more to force his way through the thickening undergrowth. Thorn branches lashed around him as he plunged over little ravines. He did not think they

touched him for he could feel no sting through the double thickness of his childish dungarees. The intertwining vines and ropelike trunks began to cover the floor of the thicket and he knew that he had stumbled into an unfamiliar hollow. He could not suppress a wild expectancy that he was going to discover something in this remote place that would make him special, a person about whom others speculated and were awed. He knew already that the unusual length of time for which even now he had been unaccountably gone would be creating a stir at home. The huge importance of his afternoon flight overwhelmed him. His foot caught in a hidden root and he clawed weakly at a vine which looped its way in front of him. When he saw his father again it would be as if a year had passed between them in which neither of them had spoken a word to the other.

He suddenly became angrily aware of his exhaustion in tearing through the roots that made the ground like the floors of ruined river shacks—treacherous with sharp angles of debris which yielded to small dark holes into which the foot might easily slide. His body assailed him with sharp reminders of the stinging insects that swarmed up from pools of stagnant water which he had begun to notice under fallen trunks. He hated the mosquitos for their unrelenting attack upon him, and he reviled his ignorant time in the warm, kerosene lamp-lit kitchen when he had cleaned his section of his father's tackle and imagined himself slipping expertly through some wild woods.

His anger had become a blind headlong run like that of a frightened animal. It ended abruptly as he almost collided with a huge fallen trunk which was propped against a rock at one end at the height of his chest. His breath coming in great gasps, he leaned his head against it and stretched his arms out over it as if to encompass its vast supportiveness within himself. He wondered how so powerful a thing could have been knocked over like this. Perhaps it had stood a century, a millennium before he had ever found it. He stared dully at its bark for a long time and then hoisted himself up onto its back. He sat astride it, dangling his feet. From here the forest floor appeared a great distance away. Tiny civilizations seemed

stretched out there beneath his huge shoe. His vision blurred slightly, and he became aware of sounds around him. A bird called in a long, exotic note, and he waited intensely for its answer from a remote tree. There was a stillness to this part of the forest though, and he now began to notice that he was in a real woods with less undergrowth and larger, straighter trees. He was embarrassed at the memory of his violent, aimless crashing through the thicket.

Branches waved above him in an infinite number of layers. He lay back along the log, his face relaxing in limp pleasure at having managed to find this place. When he closed his eyes, the pungent odor of the towering hot pines made him feel heady.

He could not have told how long he lay there before he saw the dim glint of white wood through the shaggy barked trunks which were thick around him. Pursuit of this phantom was irresistible. He had already slid off the broad back of the trunk and was advancing toward the image of a white-planked wall in a slow motion variation of his own walk before he realized the strap of his overalls had become unloosed and was dangling about his legs.

He knew he was a long time in reaching the object of his rude stare. It was inevitably going to be one of the rambling shanties which Bob Jackson had built for himself up and down the river. He was reaching the edge of the clearing in which it lay when he broke into a stumbling run through the last trees which blocked his vision. There was no mess of broken bottles, auto parts, and heaped furniture as there always was around Jackson's places. A million windows were in this old wreck of a house and all of them so covered with dust that there might have been anything behind them.

He stood stark still at first and then bolted to the front door and kicked it open with a bang. Its wood gave in more weakly than he had expected and he strode inside with an expression of contempt. The front room was not very dusty and had only scattered rough furniture of a kind he had often seen. A dark and greasy hallway led off the room and he ran along it into a huge kitchen. A great number of pots and cooking and fishing implements were hanging on the walls at both ends of the room which interested him but he ran first to inspect the large charred hole in the rear wall which made the kitchen strangely open to the grove of pines behind the house. It must have been caused by a fire from the old-fashioned iron stove which was simultaneously blackened and rusted. He looked up at a row of pots above his head and picked two off their hooks and banged them together, then tossed them in the air and caught them both. He slid one of them onto a burner on the stove, and balancing the other

on his head began marching up and down the room, giving little yelps in time to his steps. He turned abruptly and the pan slid from his head. He caught it with a loud, forced laugh just before it reached the floor and returned with it to the stove. He made motions of stirring in a blackened pot with a rusty spoon he had nearly stepped on and began to sing in the deepest, loudest voice possible a ridiculous ditty he had often heard along the docks. He imagined the huge labor force he was about to feed with his concoction and began to wave his arms wildly about as if in dismay at this tremendous task. He tossed the spoon aside and moved to the charred skeleton of a window frame and began to shout directions as to a mass of busy but misguided laborers. During his tirade, he pointed vigorously in several directions and shook his fist in the air.

In the midst of this wild gesticulation, he suddenly saw a man in back of the house. He was walking slowly through the trees and did not appear to be observing him. The boy was certain that his commotion in the kitchen had been within his earshot. He was motionless with horror, framed as he was in the charred window frame. He wanted to move away but could not. Perhaps the man had been near him in the woods. He could not comprehend the figure's intentions toward him or what he should do in order to back away from the man's presence. A pot suddenly slipped from where he had replaced it on a hook and fell to the floor with a loud crash. The man looked up directly at him as if he had known exactly where the boy was at that moment standing. The boy's revulsion at being looked at was overwhelming. He edged away from the window and fled through the house into the woods beyond.

He had reached the thicket before he had any sense of being beyond the penetration of the man's indifferent but knowing gaze. Glad that he had to stoop and practically crawl to get through certain places in the undergrowth, he self-consciously assumed a posture of total humiliation and defeat, but he felt drained of any emotion. He began moving more slowly and gradually became aware that he was heading toward his house. It seemed senseless to change direction. It struck him that perhaps this was how his father felt when he turned the fishing boat every evening toward their house on its scrubby forested little peninsula. He was amazed to see that he was nearly in the back lot of the house now. Surely he must have, in his haste and new knowledge of the forest, returned by a different and much shorter route. A strange expectation that some drastic change should have oc-

(Continued on page 31)

Anne Mize

Waiting

is the watching/ of shadows
pass from behind you
to before you—
the following/ of shadows
with the eyes
rolling
at the base
of your heart.

Susan Hills

Poem

Of the mass
a dream dwindles
or a scattering fire;
a heartache known
through glitter of ice
magnified.

frail ash
on the morning wind—
a lost desire;
a word that cries
in the salt sea
diminished.



Homeward

I

Crammed all four together (Markham Antan, his younger brother Larry and the two liver spotted bird dogs, Duchess and Able) into the dusty cab of their father's Chevrolet pick-up truck, Larry driving eyes straight ahead and fast, bouncing like no springs at all over the sandy ruts and harvest tractor puddles, splashing cold, November mud over the running boards and halfway up the doors, his hands gripped tight on the wheel with Duchess, her head down in his lap, tongue out dripping sweet saliva in spreading dark circles into the faded gray of his jeans taking up most of the seat room so that Able and Markham were pushed hard against the other door, Able's paws propped like a child's against the metal dashboard; and Markham, both guns in their fur lined leather cases (good because they always kept out moisture, but expensive) held tight between his legs, looking unconcernedly out the window, feeling the wind, cold, chapping his face and at the same time the heater spreading hot air up over his legs and chest so that he felt like a dam between two pools and the bite of the one and the kiss of the other. He squinted against the cold, looking straight out past the hood toward the cornfield, watching for dove or quail among the crumpled stalks, holding onto the window support for balance, glancing quickly off to the right at a small cottontail rabbit who dodged frantically just in time out of the wheel's way like a silent movie stunt man jumping to safety under the deadly clack, clack carriage of a train, bounding in tail-twitching fear off to the side, soon lost among the new pines and gallberry shrub, heading down through a waist high tangle of blackberry bushes to the pond out of sight where the cows drank and in warm weather stood all day, knee deep in the brown, silty water, swishing flies and chewing thick bahaia grass cuds.

His thoughts were the easy ones, about the woods and the day, bright and clear—the sun almost white in a low southern arc across the bleached sky and of course below much of the beauty just the quiet gladness of being home again, away from the strain of (maybe not even that, maybe just the existence of, with all its

bleats and smiles) the northern city rush, happy in the simple joy of his lean dog, who rested now glistening nose just showing over the cold window sill, watching too for the sight of beating wings and smell of fluff feathers—the heart beating ecstasy of a sudden quail rise.

"This is the first time I've been out here since last year," he said.

His brother had slowed the truck and was looking hard at a small flock of circling birds off to the left. On that side was a peanut field bordered in the far distance by a low line of spreading live oaks. In the field amid the crusty rows were the rotting remains of the year's crop—brown piles of wiry roots and stalks, white speckled with mold and here and there shriveled black peanuts, last tiny refugees from the combines teeth.

"I think they're doves," Larry said. "Let's stop and see if they come this way."

The truck rolled to a stop and Markham handed him his gun. They uncased the shot guns and stepped quickly down into the tall broom grass by the road. Markham knelt on one knee, eyes on the birds, loading by touch with three shells from his jacket pocket, watching intently as the birds, five black specks growing larger, swooped and climbed in sudden bursts, as if fighting some mammoth headwind at the far end of the field. Duchess and Able, still shut in the cab, began to whine softly and scratch at the doors, hanging their heads solemnly out the windows as they watched the cold shells click into the chambers.

"Shut up, Duchess," Larry said. "Can you get a shot from back there?" he asked. "We ought to spread out, but there isn't time."

Markham shuffled around on his knees to the front of the truck. The ground was wet in the road tracks and he could feel the cold mud underneath as the dampness seeped into his khaki pants. The dogs followed their movements, both in the same window now, bumping each other excitedly on the narrow seat, panting hoarsely in tongue hanging anticipation. Larry broke off one of the long grass stems and put it into his

mouth. A single killdeer sounded, far off in the corn field ahead, near the fence bordering Mack Dekle's property.

"I don't think they're doves," Markham said.

"I know. They look like turtle doves. Let's shoot anyway. Last week Buddy Davis and I killed forty-two birds out here. Most of them were blackbirds and sparrows though."

"You just killed them for the hell of it? And they weren't even game birds?"

"Buddy got two quail."

The birds were much closer now, angling across in front of the truck, heading for their roosts in the pines. As they came steadily into range Larry stood up, clicked off the safety, waited, and then fired three quick times. Two birds fell, one cartwheeling suddenly, quite unexpectedly tripped at full speed, end over end into the base of a pine tree, light breast flecked red, upside down, dead; the other glided farther into the trees, wings still, held as curved stiff brakes, landing out of sight in the thick shrub. The dogs began to bark and whine, trying to jump through the open window and finally Able succeeded, landing lightly in the grass, nose already thrust forward close to the ground, casting in uneven circles for the downed birds. Markham stood up from the mud and crushed grass. His finger clicked the safety on, off, on, off.

"Pretty good shot," he said.

"Why didn't you shoot?" Larry asked. "Damn, I shouldn't have missed that last bird. Come here Able, here dog."

"I don't know, guess you took my shot. Anyway they weren't worth killing."

"That's mighty picayune." Larry opened the truck door to let Duchess out. The dog sniffed his leg and began running back and forth between the woods and the truck, stopping to smell every log or bird track, always looking back at him for a sign.

"Let's go dogs," he shouted. "Find the birds," and began walking up the road, reloading his gun as he walked. The ribbed side heaving dogs ran on through the woods. Markham walked beside him, gun on his shoulder, his boots sucking softly in the thick mud, as the wind began to sweep across the field, blasting the dust in a flapping sheet before it, like a summer rain moving across a lawn.

"You're only staying four days aren't you?" Larry asked.

"Yes, I have to be back for classes Monday. They don't give us much time off. You all only get a couple of days though don't you?"

"Oh yeah, we just get off Thursday and Friday. Some Thanksgiving vacation."

The wind blew occasional dust devils that swirled and spun around their feet finally spending themselves against the thick bank of pines by the road. The dogs were gone around the bend, ahead where the road angled sharply into the woods to run straight for two miles along the fence that bordered Mac Dekle's property. A smoky horse stood across the fence in the pasture beyond the bend, pulling up grass in the shadow of a young cottonwood stand. The wind seemed to have died in the field for the naked trees were still.

"What's it like up in Boston?" Larry asked. "What's it like going to school in New England, in a big city?"

Everyone asked him that. His father was proud and asked him at dinner in front of his grandparents and uncles and aunts; at the table, where they were waited on by old George the Negro whose last name was Washington and who was born in the Virgin Islands; who sometimes forgot whether to serve on the right or the left and made grandmother fuss. Between the relishes and the soup they asked him about school and Boston because he was the oldest and the first to go away and he had done well. They were all proud to have a son or a grandson or a nephew who had shown himself capable. Grandmother talked about it in Baptist Women's Missionary Union meetings and father and uncle talked about it at board meetings of the bank. The Quitman school system must be pretty good if it can still get a boy into a good Ivy League college. I'm so glad he didn't have to go to the University. We just knew he could do so well. They all looked at him over iced tea and celery, and their eyes were bright.

It's all right, he had answered. It's a very big place, but I like it.

"The work's pretty hard up there isn't it?" His aunt had put down her soup spoon to ask him.

"Well, it's pretty hard for me."

They laughed.

Now Larry was asking, because they were brothers and he wanted to know. Larry had said nothing at the table.

"What's Boston like?"

"It's dirty and there are a lot of subways. Some of it's nice though. School's pretty hard.

"I guess so."

"The climate's really different up there, too. They have almost no pine trees. The leaves are beautiful in the fall, but I miss the way it looks down here. It's not so bad though. We have pretty good times on the weekends."

"Tell me."

They passed around the bend and headed up the narrow road between the fence and woods. The dogs

were still out of sight, but they could be heard running through the brush off to the right.

"Here Duchess, Able," Larry called as the pointers broke out of the trees ahead. "Hunt those birds."

The dogs loped toward them a short ways then turned and continued to trot up the road, staying mostly in the tracks, occasionally dipping off a few steps into the bushes. Larry lit a cigarette and threw the match into a puddle.

"Look," he said, pointing to the fence.

Caught in two crossed strands of rusty barbed wire was a dead quail. The feathers on one wing were shredded to expose the bone and the neck was snapped so that the brown head hung flat on its breast. Markham touched it and it was cold, but there was no odor so it could not have been dead for long.

"He must have flown right into the wire without seeing it," Larry said. "Sometimes they do that. One time down at Sinkola we found a deer that had tried to jump a fence and got its leg caught. Broke it just below the knee. He must have been there for at least a season because he was all bone except the fur on the caught leg."

"Ow, I hate that," Markham answered. He pulled the wires apart so that the bird dropped to the ground. It fell brokenly at his feet and he pushed it into the grass under the fence. Its dark eyes were open and beginning to dull. He turned away.

"Did you see what those dogs did?" Larry asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Why they walked right past the bird and didn't even touch it. That's great. It was dead and they didn't want to have anything to do with it. Those dogs have been trained right. They know not to bother a cold bird."

"Or else they didn't know it was a quail."

"Oh, they knew. Those dogs are damn good. Mr. Bob trained them."

Markham wiped his hand on his coat and walked on down the road. Across the fence the wind was picking up again. Several meadow larks burst out of the top cottonwood branches. The horse was farther down the field, facing toward the lowering sun.

Markham had listened to the wind blowing heart strong down through the Georgia piedmont all the night before. He had lain in bed, iron taut under the covers as the pines bending like sapling mantraps marched across the lawn. With windows and eyes closed and the quilt tight up around his face he had tried to dream and catch the spring and summer smells of jasmine and azalea that drifted up out of the arboretum woods on near forgotten nights. But the time was pierced with leaves gust thrown against the window

glass and graceless trees feebly bowed against the sharpened sky. And in the darkness those pocked fields were spurred away by the cloudy moon.

This fall the smells were no longer Bermuda pastures or woods, but the clogging insistence of Boston's cars and factories, spreading, looping around and over the Charles, disappearing past Wellsley and New Hampshire on the West and North and passing eastward in dark oil stains into the final permanence of the rippling bay.

The elevated trains groaned like pestered buffalo overhead then spirited electrically downward running for miles in tunnels to daily end, it seemed for everyone, in the white tile walls below the dirt of the Square. He had sat in darkened, bunk bed rooms and thought long of ancient girls, all named Letha Liane and wide, slow rivers, red in the sunlight. And outside the misting lights reflected off faraway slate roofs, and the power poles, like spindly trees, were black against the old stone buildings. Beside the bed in his room he kept a notebook and each night wrote about New England and how he felt, and about home.

Just before dawn the wind died, slumping the trees back stiff and sentinel straight. In the half light he slipped from the bed, down the long stairs and out onto the front porch. The dogs moved restlessly in the pen below the garage. Mist was heavy down on the pond where the willows had pitched all night and the sky was just light in the East. For an hour he stood on the steps feeling the new day. His mind was not yet clean of the city thickness, but he was home. The cathedral stillness was broken finally by the first laughter of the morning birds, but the woods were swept fine and quiet.

II

Larry moved ahead of him along the track just out of the woods, walking slow behind the dogs. The dusty horse was almost out of sight, heading barnward through the pasture. The ground was wet only in the deep tractor tracks and Markham walked beside the road in the grass, catching prickly bursts of sand spurs in his pant legs.

"Are you really glad you went north to school?" Larry asked. He had slowed to let him catch up. "I don't think I'd like going that far away."

"I don't know. Sometimes I feel I'd like to transfer to the University so I could be near home. Everything's strange up there. I don't know how to get anywhere in the town, except around the Square and to a couple of picture shows."

"You ought to come back down here to school."

"Maybe."

Of a sudden Larry stopped and motioned him to be still with a flick of his hand. The dogs casting far ahead had caught a feathered scent. Duchess was moving back and forth on the right between the tangle of an uprooted pine stump and a heavy stand of blackberry bushes.

"Duchess, close in here," Larry called. Able moved up behind the other pointer, walking slow and light, head down, eyes on the bushes.

"I think we've got them," Larry said. He spoke low, moving forward in a half crouch, his gun held up in front of him, fingers on trigger and safety.

"The birds ought to hold really well," he said. It's been cold all week and it's just wet enough for them to stay put."

"How do you want to work this?" Markham asked. He checked the shells in his gun and moved away from Larry keeping close to the fence.

"You go on around to the left, on the other side of Duchess. I'll stay over here and we'll run them straight into the woods."

"All right."

"Wait a minute, they've got them. Let them get set then move around. Get on the other side of Able. Looks like he's just pointing Duchess."

"Okay."

Markham moved through the yellow grass in the road center to the far side of the dogs. His coat seemed too heavy and the loose box of shells bulged awkwardly in his pockets. The wind grew in the pines and he could hear the sharp chatter and rustle of some small birds moving in the trees off to his left. He was conscious of the swish of his boots through the grass. He pushed the safety to off with his thumb and moved the gun up from under his arm.

"Spread out a little and let's walk them up," Larry said.

Duchess was crouched low, right foreleg pulled up to her chest, tail straight out behind twitching like cramps—her only sign of movement. A good dog would stay like that until he dropped, sometimes for a couple of hours. Duchess was young and steady.

"Watch where they go when they break." Larry angled around not as close to the dogs.

Markham eased into the brush, measuring every step, watching the dark eyed pointers, following their stare into the grass. He was just ahead of Larry, nervous for a good shot, edging around between the dogs, trying to anticipate the first whirl of the rise.

As he moved up almost to the lead dog Able made a sudden move behind him. His point had been blind only honoring his sister's and now with Markham moving in front he pulled himself forward, sliding

through the grass, trying to catch the scent that the damp had muffled. He whined very low. Markham, hearing the movement glanced quickly back. As he did, Duchess, the older dog who should have known better, who had hunted before at least one whole season in dry and wet and whose father was Prince, once the best dog in the county, startled by the posterior movements and sudden sounds rushed forward so quickly and so effortlessly that the closest bird got up almost under his nose in a burst of feathered frenzy drawing the dog up off the ground after it like a furious, tiny engine as if the two were tied by some invisible cord and Markham, who had not fired all day, pulled his gun up, trying for two or maybe three in one rise, swung the dark muzzle with the flight, and in swinging lost his aim or no aim at all and with one red blast blew the side of the dog's head away.

The covey broke into the pines, scattered beyond all range and then the woods were very still.

Larry jumped a ragged palmetto and ran to the crumpled dog. Kneeling beside it he threw his gun down, so hard that it bounced back and hit his leg, but the safety was on. The dog had cartwheeled one time completely over and slid into a gallberry bush. Larry tore it aside and touched the crushed head.

"This is fine, just fine. This is fine." He looked up. "You bastard, don't you know to wait to shoot. You have to wait. Oh, no." He was red and angry.

Markham felt his face cold and his legs began to die beneath him. He tried to stand still and straight, but could not and supported himself on his gun, the barrel thrust down into the dirt. Larry stood up and looked down at the dog. Able winced and sniffed at the blood. The wind rushed in the trees overhead.

"You really tore him up," his voice was soft. He clenched his fists at his sides, one time. "Oh, Damn it."

He turned to Markham.

"I'll go get the truck and bring it on around here. You stay." He picked up his shotgun and walked back out to the road. Markham did not want to stay with the dog.

"Come on, Able," Larry called and they headed down the road, Larry trotting and the dog close behind.

Markham did not move until his brother had passed out of hearing around the bend. Then he walked over to the dog and sat down beside it with his back to a pine's shingly bark. He snapped the shotgun chamber twice and the red, plastic coated shells popped out in flipping arcs like party fire-crackers to land out of sight in the grass. He stared at the dog and where the caved skull was hidden by the bush. Forest shadows in lobed osmosis spread like quiet water at his back and the crack-screach of a squirrel reached his

ears. Time did not seem to pass and it was as if the sun could never again set on these woods and dusty breech, or if once set could never again rise. His numbing hands plaited a three strand rope of yellow broom grass. He tried to think of the brilliant, steeped answers of the lives of men and animals, but the crystal day was cold and almost gone.

Dropping his gun, he got slowly up and stood with his back to the single tree, facing out toward the

brown pasture. Across the field the day was finally going as straggling flocks of blackbirds beat their way toward roosts in a distant line of trees. He remembered the words he had written in the notebook beside his bed in Boston: "I want to live a life than can be jotted as vegetables on a grocery list; and the time and the place." They were written in New England, after the leaves had gone and left the cold. In the dusk he waited for his brother to come take him home.

The Garden

(Continued from page 10)

den he knew what he must say. "Father, Mother told Lisa she must go tomorrow."

He shaded his eyes from the lamp beside him, and took a sip of his drink before replying.

"She did, did she?"

"Yes sir." Timothy wished he hadn't told him. Somehow it seemed too big a thing to speak at the party. He felt small having said it, and out of place, with the guests all around.

"She's on the porch and wants to say good-bye."

His father set his drink down, looking at him all the while.

"Let's go say so long then." He took his son's hand and together they made their way through the guests. One man, his head nodding from the coming on of sleep, smiled deeply at Timothy. "And how was the garden, young man?" It was the same guest who had laughed at him before. "I didn't go," he said and led his father on into the hall, and to the porch for she waited.

He watched from the doorway as he bowed, and she curtsied, and they completed the scene begun so long ago, it seemed. He left them there with this last game, and walked alone down the path to the gate. The fires smoldered low in the black cups of torches, consuming themselves in the metal's cold confinement.

He hooked his finger in the tie, yanking it loose, and breathed the heavy tea-olive of summer. It would sink into autumn's odorless calm.

Sienna was calling from the porch now. She would have put an end to the dancing there, like it had to be. Only this once, just once, he would not answer.

Five O'Clock

(Continued from page 24)

curred in the appearance of the house gripped him. He believed he would see the paint peeling from the walls, the door ajar and off its hinge as though someone had run out of it in a frenzy.

In a moment he stood at the edge of the thicket and was confounded to see that the panorama of house and yard was precisely as he had left it. He moved across the yard to the kitchen door and stood outside staring in at the table. There had obviously been little time there for them to do anything but sweep the fishing equipment off the table where his father always left it for him to clean and put out plates for supper. He considered the idea that he had been gone for an entire night and day or perhaps two. Then he saw his father walk through a room at the opposite end of the house. Deciding to mend a broken place he knew about in one of the nets, he went inside.

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ADVERTISER'S INDEX

Duke Barber Shop	32	Gothic Bookstore	2
Duke Dining Halls	3	Ivy Room Restaurant	32
Duke Power Company	2	Jack Rabbit Laundry	32
Duke Press	2nd cover	Record Bar	1
Duke Stores	2	West Side Pharmacy	32
Durham Engraving Co.	3rd cover		



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CONTENTS

STORIES

- | | |
|--|----|
| Mud Between His Toes
<i>by Sean Devereux</i> | 5 |
| While The Band Played On
<i>by Dave Young</i> | 16 |
| Weekend Home
<i>by Katherine Humphreys</i> | 23 |

POEMS

- | | |
|---|----|
| The Sadness of A Simple Time
<i>by Vicky White</i> | 14 |
| Poem
<i>by Lan Sluder</i> | 15 |
| Carapace
<i>by Marsha Poirier</i> | 22 |
| Revolution after revolution we find the unworld
<i>by Stephen Karver</i> | 22 |
| Quick and Weary Game
<i>by Chamblee Owen</i> | 27 |

ART

- | | |
|--|----|
| Cover: Watercolor
<i>by Jean Landberg</i> | |
| Photo—"Factory"
<i>by Walter Chapin</i> | 13 |
| Drawing
<i>by Jan Broderson</i> | 15 |

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Mud Between His Toes

Through the dirty window, beginning to smear now in the light rain, Paul watched the creek come dark and heavy around the bend.

"You takin' Celeste to the show tonight, down to the drive-in?"

He drew his gaze back through the window, focused for an instant, painfully, as always, upon his reflection on the inside of the glass and turned his eyes toward his father.

"I don't know. I haven't called her."

He turned back to the window and let his stare lengthen down to the creek. On the inside of the bend, cypress knees protruded and carved scrolling eddies into the smooth ebony surface. Home now, Paul thought of this place where he had been and had come to again. The gray, weathered building, his father's fishcamp, endured on this one bit of high ground, this bluff overlooking the creek and the sawgrass prairie and cypress swamp which went for nearly ten miles beyond. A "river" they called it, although it was perhaps forty yards across the water, which moved, imperceptibly, constantly, forward. The creek, stained black by the tannic acid in the cypress roots and sullied, now, here, downstream from the place where the cows watered and left the shore a pockmarked morass, this creek rose from a filigree of springborn tributaries several miles upstream from the fishcamp. In the summer, in the hot months, mosquitoes bred in the pools where the cows had walked in the sucking mud. But the foul-smelling mud was miles downstream from the springs. There, the river had its beginnings, at the springs.

The sky was a low, gray hemisphere over the

swamp and a cold December drizzle dulled the mirror surface of the creek. A claustrophobic day, with the sky clamped on so tightly and so low. A good day, though. Everything was reduced and concentrated. It was easier for him to think when the gray ceiling blocked his view of infinity. He would have preferred to contemplate infinity, but was locked into this smaller world of the cold, dripping swamp.

"You could carry her down to the dance at the pavilion tonight," his father said. "Delisle is going."

"The pavilion?"

"Yea, they're not using it for fishing so much any more, since the river got so polluted, but they still have dancing every Saturday night."

Paul remembered the pavilion, on the shore of the creek, two miles downstream from the fishcamp. The pavilion, he recalled, where from April to October people swam and picnicked and drank beer and danced on the smooth cypress floor in the coolness of the round wooden building. Just below the swimming area, the sewer pipe emptied into the creek. While the juke box played on. When that juke box, or a band for exceptional occasions, ceased to wail into the swamp early on Sunday mornings, they all drove away in their cars and left the chicken bones and beer cans in the mud underneath the pavilion, which sat on pilings above the marsh. Even after they were gone and the pavilion lights were out and the swamp regained its rightful, primal blackness, the sewer pipe continued to ooze.

And the cars straggled home along State Road 13, stopping with headlights out, while their passengers

exchanged beer-breath pleasantries up some sand road off the highway, off in the pine scrub. A good time was had by all.

This was his memory of the pavilion.

In front of the window, Paul moved his head and, with the light at a new angle, saw himself in the glass and wondered how he appeared to other people.

"Has Delisle been going out much, while I've been gone," he asked.

"Hell, he ain't missed a Friday or Saturday night since August. Your little brother's gettin' to be quite a tomat. And you can't even quit them books long enough to go see your girl."

"Celeste isn't 'my girl,'"

"You was happy enough to have her, before you went off. And I don't hear you talkin' about anything better. You wanna give me a hand with this."

Paul turned to help, but before he moved, his father swung the large outboard motor up onto the bench. The movement seemed effortless, except that a net of tendons and veins bulged all along his father's forearm.

His father, a man of medium height, had retained, with the exertion that his work demanded, a broad-shouldered strength. Since his wife's death three years earlier, he came to the fishcamp at five in the morning—before the fishermen began to arrive—and left at ten at night, seven days a week, assembling tackle, repairing his boats, cleaning fish, drawing beer, advising and storytelling with every fisherman who came in. His father knew more about bass plugs than any other man in Marion or Putnam Counties. Paul was aware, more consciously and disturbingly lately, that his father lived in perfect harmony with the river and with the rhythm of the fishcamp.

"You're gettin' scrawny, boy. What they feedin' you over in Tallahassee?"

"I eat pretty well. The food in the dining halls is all right."

"You never did eat no more'n a tree sparra, anyhow. Let's get this boat up here and take a look at her."

They lifted the skiff, turned it upside down and rested its gunwales on the sawhorses. Paul's father drew the chisel sharply along a seam and looked up at him.

"You scared of Celeste or something, now that she's a big girl?"

"No, sir."

"Then why you been hidin' from her ever since you come home?"

"I went out to see her the first night I was here."

"And ain't been back or called her since then. And

that's been a week. Celeste is a fine, little ol' girl, good-lookin' and smart as you could ask for. She hadn't been runnin' around on you while you been gone. You'd best call her."

"Yes, sir."

And Paul was thinking not of Celeste Huttoe, who lived down the road, on the creek, who had always lived down the road, on the creek, who had been a presence in all of his remembered existence; he was thinking not of this real girl, who was for him, but of the blonde-haired, unattainable forms at the college. He had seen them, and saw them, with hopelessness. There was pain in seeing them, in knowing them, those who were always there, but would never be there for him, except as whitest laughing teeth and firm, warm grace, whose touch would never be for him, would never reach out and take his hunger and release it, slowly at first and then faster until all glowed red and then white and then cooled into a wordless perfection forged from the hunger in the heat.

But Celeste was real, and here, now. He supposed.

"I don't want to argue with you about Celeste. I think a lot of her. She's been writing to me at school. We had a good time the other night."

"Where'd you go?"

"We stayed over at her house and talked some."

"And you were back here at ten o'clock."

"I had some work to do."

"Yea, work. You been wormed in with them damn books ever since you got home. You don't notice your little brother coming home at any ten o'clock. 'Bout time you started howlin' at the back fence yourself, son. Don't be scared of gettin' a little mud between your toes. That's what it's all about."

Paul resented the leer. He thought of bringing one of them, one of the impossible others, here, of walking with her up to the back room of the fishcamp where his father fixed outboard motors and cleaned fish on the big table, bloodstained and covered with fish scales. His father would look up, frowning, from his work. "I'd like you to meet my father." And "Dad, this is. . ." The big hand then, purple veins heavy on the back, black with lubricating grease, taking her white hand; his eyes moving slowly, up and down, over the sacredness, seeing only the body of a girl.

"Somethin' ain't right when a boy'll sit around studyin' rather than goin' out. You ain't goin' to get anywhere with a girl doin' like that. You were up all night, weren't you?"

"No, sir. Not all night."

"You hardly been outside since you got home. Somebody's goin' to grab that girl off, if you don't

show her a good time now and then. It bothers me to see you giving up Celeste for them books. Its strange and I don't like it. I'm not payin' any dam college to make a boy of mine into a candy-ass."

Paul watched the dark, strong current snake through the winter-bare swamp. He wanted for the thousandth time to tell this man that he wasn't paying for anything, but a leaf drifted down from the high branches of a water oak, swirled suddenly, moving downstream with the current and he said only,

"There'll be time to see her and do other things when I'm finished with school."

"You ever gonna finish? I ain't gonna be around forever and I want to see you turnin' out."

And Paul was glad, for the thousandth time, that a quick, hot burst had not severed the final, tenuous bond which still linked them and drew them together, rarely any more, but then at quiet times, fishing, or, as now, when they worked together with tools and wood and strong-smelling resin glue.

"Graduating from college isn't turning out?" he asked.

"That ain't it. Its like going to that college is an excuse for putting things off."

Paul turned away. Movement invaded the scene framed by the window. He watched the green skiff, with a small motor droning on its stern, move upstream against the current. The wake of the boat fantailed behind it and started the hyacinths, bulbous and browning now after the first freeze, to heaving in the shallows. Tied in a line along the dock, the gray skiffs rose and fell, in piston-like succession on every incoming wave. The waves, he knew, were breaking among the tarred dock pilings and washing the greasy, motor oil mud underneath the pier. Soft drink cans and cardboard fishing worm containers were pushed farther back into the sawgrass.

The thick woollen sky moved down closer and the drizzle became a steady rain. Like a Japanese print, Paul thought. The stand of cypress gaunt like that on the far shore. Thinly etched trees and mist. Days like this purified, washed the stench from the marsh along the shore, beneath the bluff. All the gasoline and creosote and rotting swamp smells, which the mud retained and effused in the sun heat, were cleansed away with the rain.

Paul wished that he were in the skiff, moving through the haze, now rain, with the dampness gathering and laving his face.

"Why don't you take Celeste on down to the pavilion tonight? There'll be dancing and all. People you ain't seen in a while. Delisle'll be glad to have you

go with him." His father's voice was confused, almost pleading now, insistent still.

Where it flowed by the pavilion, the creek would roil up brown after all this rain, as it always did. Upstream, the springs might even muddy for a time, but they cleared up quickly.

"I'll call her," Paul said listlessly, thinking of the yellow, bile color that the water turned when the creek rose high enough to eat away at the clay bank.

He remembered the day when, after the other swimmers had left him, he had lain on a water oak limb out over the springs and had stared down into the water, trying to see deep; deepest, down where the water seethed, clear, pure up out of the crevices in the limestone. For two hours he had stayed there, with the sun heavy on his back, still, feeling no need to ever move again, staring down, seeing the spring renew itself, regain its clarity, seeing it grow clear again until the waterlogged wood and the limestone blocks, covered green with algae, showed distinct against the white sand at the bottom, in thirty feet of water. And he there, prostrate on the rough bark of the oak, another ten feet above the basin. Only he and the two other boys knew about the sinkholes, hidden in the ravine; so he was sure that he would not be disturbed there.

After two hours of just being, there, he had pulled himself up, had stripped bare, and stood creet on the branch, breathing heavily, before he had dived for the whiteness forty feet below him.

A straight plunge then into the gripping, cold totality, as deep as his momentum had thrust him. He remembered the strangeness of being naked in that water, the feeling of completeness, of a wholeness never known before. He had been unified, one complete body functioning perfectly, harmoniously, with slow-motion grace; arms, legs, and torso, attuned labored for the bottom. Nearing the white floor of the springs, he was forced to pull himself down over the limestone juttings, raced against the uprush of the current. Like an inverted mountain climb. Having attained the bottom, with a handful of white sand, he released his grip on the rocks and drifted toward the surface, free then and freer, as the layers of pressure fell away from his body, breathing out and rising slowly, no faster than his own chrome-topped, bell-shaped bubbles.

Now, in the always imperfection of the present, his hands, without the aid of his mind, worked the chisel back and forth, digging out the dark, soft, dry-rot infections along the seams of the skiff, Paul scraped awkwardly. Once the chisel, slipped, as he, without concentrating, gouged at the powdery, diseased wood,

and it almost caught him in the forehead. His glasses swung awry. He felt foolish, vulnerable, with his glasses hanging from one ear, that way. His father looked up from the workbench.

"Boy, you know better'n to use a chisel like that. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," Paul said. (He still calls me "boy.")

"I raised you to be able to work with your hands. Two years of school made you forget all of that?"

"No." (He used to talk about my being his "first born," like the oldest son was special, sacred or something almost religious about the way he said it.)

"Let me see that chisel. How come you're always off on a cloud somewheres?"

"I don't know." (I guess a man's son is his only immortality—the chance to live on past himself. Or to live again, differently.)

"Well, you'd better come on down and get a grip on things. It's time you got a holda things."

"Yes, sir." (How would he have it from me? How would he have me do things?)

His father took the tool and with a smooth, practiced grace, scooped and rounded the rough edges which Paul had left. In his father's hands, the chisel cut quickly, with a constant evenness.

Paul went to the window and his mind slipped away again. He had swum out of the springs that day and had lain, still naked, flat on his stomach in the sand, stretching and relaxing his muscles, feeling the sun peel off the wetness and cover him with its own warm liquid. He had been formed in a mold of sun-heat. He had not had many days like that one, days solid in his memory, days when all passed smoothly into completion and each disparate happening related to every other and to the whole—like a poem. Finished, completed, each of these rare days was preserved in his mind as a unity; remembered, it came back, compellingly and thankfully, as One. A day, not the accretion of chance particles, restless still when gathered, but a distinct, enduring form, consciously carven from a single block of stone.

If he had these days which held together in his memory, if he had them to keep and return to, he could make mistakes afterward, be awkward or ugly and it wouldn't matter, because he would always have the day when he had dived, straight, from the oak branch into the springs and had lain in the warm white sand. Ugliness afterward could not take that from him; not even rusty beer cans on the bottom or a mud-rolled river could blemish the clear-water-and-white-sand-day.

His father spoke up from his scraping,

"Celeste's probably already been asked out. There are plenty of young bucks around here be glad to have that little girl."

"You're really a reductionist."

"What?"

"You talk like we're all deer at the rutting time. Like she was in heat or something."

"It ain't nothing more than that, boy. Don't think it is."

Paul was wanting to shout his protest then. And he knew that he could never find the language to explain to this rough man, for whom it all was so natural beyond question, to tell him what this thing, ever on his mind now, must mean to him. Before he had read Kipling's words, he had known this truth from as long as he had been aware of what he, as a man, must do, would do, that "a man's heart always goes back to the place where he lost it."

To the place, to the time, to the girl, and to himself, there, then with her. Back to the hour of the day and to the sky and to the ground warm underneath and to the way the sunlight came shattered through the trees overhead and to the noises all around in the still air and to how she smiled, if she smiled, after.

Everything within range of his sight and smell and hearing and touch then would be drawn together and held in a stasis which would remain, despite what came later.

He was paralyzed by the need to control and guide the event. For him, this first time would be, had to be, like the writing of a poem, that would last.

"Let's get this new board in here where that one's rotted out," his father said and began tearing away the dry, diseased wood. He slid the new plank into the gap. The cypress board, brown still and grainy, was out of place next to the other aged and paint-flecked wood. The rest of the decking was gray, toughened with exposure and use. Cypress weathers dry and gray. Paul looked at the conspicuous, brown, fresh piece and wished that he could build the whole skiff over again with new wood.

"I can finish the nailin' and scrapin'. You go call Celeste. You hear?"

"Yes, sir."

He would rather have gone to his room and read or have rowed a skiff upstream with long, solid strokes, against the current, with the rain drifting onto his face. He knew this. But it didn't matter so much. He would call Celeste.

II

The rain had stopped and the moon, ringed slightly, was showing low over the pine scrub. Because he

had nowhere else to go with her, except to a Jerry Lewis movie, which she had seen twice, Paul drove with Celeste down State Road 13 toward the pavilion.

"Paul, could you roll up that window for me. I had my hair done this afternoon. All for you. You don't want me to walk in all frizzly, do you?"

He looked at Celeste without answering. She had been a cheerleader in high school, he remembered. Her hair was piled up and stiff with spray.

Even in December, the breeze felt good. A light coolness against his face. He wondered if a gale could budge that cemented hair out of place.

For an instant he glimpsed the alternative, in her never-never land beyond his reach: she, on a beach at night, her hair blowing behind her in the wind that rushed the clouds past the face of the moon. She stood on the white sand there and laughed to be wind-caressed and the stars which showed between the patches of cloud, numbered exactly as many as the sand grains on the seashore. And she, the impossible, blond-haired girl, was kneeling and pouring the white sand through her fingers. And it was sparkling in her hands as each particle caught the light of its sister star in the sky.

"Paul, did you bring something for us to drink tonight?" Celeste asked, as she turned the rear-view mirror on herself and reinforced her lipstick.

"No."

"Paul."

"I think Delisle has something with him."

"Whiskey sours, I hope. I love whiskey sours."

"I don't know."

"Paul, you didn't tell me much about college the other night, when you came out. How is everything, really?"

The pines palisaded up on either side of the road and his headlights cut a tunnel in which he drove through the night.

"What?" he said.

"How is school?"

Remembering that he would return there is less than a week, he smiled at her.

"Fine. It's all right. How do you like working in town?"

"Well, I'm only a typist, but I love it really. I was so tired of books and studying and all. The other girls are a lot of fun. But I don't plan to make a career of it or anything. What are you going to do when you get out?"

Ahead, on the right, above the trees, a glow marred the darkness.

"Do you really want to go to the pavilion tonight?" Paul asked.

"Not if you want to go somewhere else," she said. "But everybody will be there. And where else is there to go?"

And he was thinking that nobody would be there and that, yes, there is somewhere else to go, I know, but I'm preserving that place and now is not the time. And he was saying,

"Nowhere else, I guess."

So he turned right off the firm highway into the pavilion parking lot, left muddy and rutted after the rain. The old building rested on pilings in a marshy lowland. The bottomland along the creek flooded easily and now the parking lot was crisscrossed with tire-track ruts. Paul was afraid of getting stuck here. In the summer, the puddles were a greenish color and a fetid smell hung in the air around the pavilion. The word "miasma" occurred to him.

"Hey, Celeste, the pavilion people ought to put a sign here: 'Warning! Noxious miasma in the area. May be injurious to health.'"

She was looking out her window at the parking lot.

"What? How am I going to walk through that gooey mud?"

"I don't know," Paul said.

As he parked, his headlight beam lighted a bumper sticker on the car in front of his. Spotlit, the grillwork of the late model Ford leered its message: "All you girls who smoke cigarettes throw your butts in here."

Celeste laughed.

Beneath the sticker, a Confederate flag license plate was bolted on.

Paul got out of the car and walked around to open the door for Celeste. The night sounds, the cricket and frog drone which swelled up out of the swamp, were lost in the noise from the pavilion. The clash and pulse of the band, the bright lights, were alien, and temporary, against the swamp night. Paul took Celeste's hand and they walked between puddles toward the building.

Celeste ran ahead, up the steps and into the pavilion. Paul stopped to scrape his feet on the worn wooden steps, but saw the mud tracked across the porch, and followed Celeste inside.

Out on the dance floor, bodies tossed in the waves of vibration; in the red light, which flashed intermittently, the motion of the dancers was spasmodic and distorted. Celeste was immediately immersed in the sound, and was leading him through the chaotic movement, shrieking her delight as she recognized couples which she had not seen in several days. In her ecstasy, she squeezed Paul's hand and smiled up at him. She

bounced and whirled with the sound, finding a harmony in what for him was harsh and cacophonous. They could not talk to each other, for the loudness, which was a barrier between them.

Paul saw his brother in a line of dancers, who, with their arms around each other's shoulders, swayed and kicked in front of the bandstand. He left Celeste and walked toward the group. Delisle, wide like their father but taller, jerked with the sound and tossed his head back, sweating and grinning in the flashing light.

Paul remembered square dances here when he was in the eighth grade. He had been captivated by the easy grace of the Virginia Reel.

When the music was chopped to a halt, Delisle bearhugged the girl next to him up off the floor and, whopping, swung her around in circles. He put her down and stopped yelling when he saw Paul.

"Why don't you run off to the little girl's room, honey, and powder your nose. I gotta have a word or two with my big brother."

Delisle's speech was already slurred, but his tone was not yet mocking. The girl trotted off, obediently.

"What'er you doin' here, big brother? This kinda thing ain't for a grown-up college man."

Delisle grinned without malice, without mockery.

"Nothing else to do," Paul said.

"Did Daddy make you come?"

"He suggested that I go out with Celeste tonight. What makes you ask that?"

"He just wants you to have a little fun, now and then. You been workin' too hard, big brother."

"Why should Dad make me come?"

"No reason, big brother. He just thinks its a little weird you studyin' them books all the time and not doin' anything else. That's all. What's the word with old Celeste?"

"She's fine," Paul said.

"Yea, I can see that. I heard she ain't the iceberg she was in high school. Whatya say, big brother? Know anything about that?"

"What do you mean?" Paul said.

"Well, she's not doin' it for the troops or anything but they tell me she's got the husband panic, just the same as the rest of them. It wouldn't hurt you to find out. Bring her home with that sweater of hers on inside out. Daddy'd love it if he found a few bobby pins layin' around in the car."

"Watch your mouth, Delisle." Paul started to walk away.

"What?" Delisle said. "Take it easy, big brother. Celeste is a girl like any of them. She's got red blood flowin' in her veins and that means one thing. If

you can handle it. Tell me if she's any action. Maybe I'll take her out." Delisle grinned over his shoulder, as he moved toward the crowd of boys and girls in the corner.

"Don't count on that happening, any time soon. Ever," Paul said.

Paul stood there, alone, in the middle of the floor, slowly, gratefully, becoming conscious of the swamp drone outside. Then the band members began tuning their instruments, preparing for a fresh onslaught against the night.

The band began to play and Paul navigated through the writhing labyrinth to the spot where he had left Celeste. She was waiting there and smiled at him as he came toward her.

"Paul, you haven't even danced with me yet," she said.

The racking, quick pulse of the sound from the bandstand had shifted to a slow discordance; around the room, couples were clutched tightly together. Paul moved with Celeste in circles, rocking back and forth, looking over her shoulder at the dancers. He thought of Plato's definition of Love. And laughed. Man, a half and woman, a half. Of a sphere. And the separate, incomplete halves, knowing their incompleteness and uniting to restore the whole; all the unhappy halves joining in Perfect Unions. That's Love. As Paul watched, over Celeste's shoulder, the Ideal Forms rotated slowly around the room; the Beautiful and the Good reigned supreme.

Celeste spoke now and violated the spell into which those around them seemed to be cast.

"Remember the dances we used to have in junior high, Paul. You always slowdanced in a straight line and the girls used to count how many steps it would take you to get from one end of the pavilion to the other."

"The girl whom I took the most steps with knew that she was the chosen one, right?"

Celeste laughed up at him. He smiled, but the uncertainty and pain of that time remained potent in his mind. He had known that they were laughing but not why. Girls had never laughed at Delisle. Or if they had, he neither noticed nor cared.

The pavilion was now as it had been the first time he had come here. It was a step toward adulthood, he believed then, coming to the pavilion for the first time alone, and he had been proud. He had walked around the floor, staring up at the heavy oak beams overhead under the conical, cypress-shingle roof and had run his hand along the long, pine poles, polished to a satin smoothness after thirty years, decorated

where three generations had attempted, with their pocketknives, to gain artistic immortality. At one end of the room was a fieldstone fireplace, which was seldom used. He had turned his back to the bar to keep the flashing beer and coke signs out of the picture he was recording in his mind, but even the knowledge that they were there had not blighted his impression of this rustic, robust room. He had wanted a home like that, big and airy, with a fieldstone fireplace and heavy roofbeams.

And he recalled that his vision had been fouled by real things. The dignity of the log building, with the cypress shingle roof, had been violated by the sick smell of drunkenness. Boys, becoming men, had fought, cursing, and had bloodied each other there, as he had watched.

Then he had seen the white metal box on the wall of the men's room.

"Combs. That machine sells combs. Don't mess with it," his father had replied. Paul had not expected the sharpness in his father's voice.

He had read the printing on the machine. "Sold solely for the prevention of disease," the words said. He had stared at the picture of the boxing glove smashing the large red letters, "V.D.". And he had been confused.

The older boys smirking explanation had left him hurt and protesting. The thrill, the joyous, adolescent sensation of touch, of dancing close, had become then, self-conscious and accusing; something of beauty shrivelled into grotesqueness.

How could the Beautiful and the Good be diseased? A huge boxing glove swung down and shattered a perfect Platonic sphere with "L,O,V,E," written large on it, in red letters. Sharp particles scattered on the pavilion floor and flashed red, on and off.

Paul reflected that he had shaken the grip of those things from his mind, Celeste was comfortable and warm to dance with. He pulled away from her.

"Let's go out on the dock and cool off."

She nodded, brightening, and led him through the enchanted pairs, which remained pairs, through the back door and onto the wooden dock, which reached out over the creek.

The moon, higher now over the swamp, silvered the ripples and Celeste looked out over the creek where the light of the moon was a bright dagger blade on the water.

"Jimmie and them sure on are gettin' on it to-night," she said.

"Jimmie?"

"Jimmie. The boy who's playing the drums."

"Oh, him. Yes, young James is quite an artist all right," Paul said.

"We don't get much good music around here. Nothing since 'Martha and the Vandellas' came to the auditorium over at Ocala about two months ago."

"I'm glad folks around here haven't had to cope with total cultural deprivation," he said.

A paper cup rested on the railing of the dock. Celeste pushed it off, into the water and smiled at him. They both watched it float downstream in the current.

"I wonder how long it will take to get to the river," she said.

Paul shrugged and looked upstream toward the springs. With the moon this bright, the springs would be clear, down all the way to the bottom and the sand beach a ring of alabaster against the dark scrub. He wanted to take someone there and point into the depths for her, until, for her eyes also, the water was clear in the moonlight and objects, for her the same as for him, began to take shape on the bottom, thirty feet down. And he might make her know what this place had meant to him and share with her his spring, this hidden circle, where the creek was regenerated and cleansed.

And his heart would go back to the place where he lost it.

Lying there, in the thick matted pinestraw, they could look up and see the moon centered in the ring of pines around the white sand beach, which encircled the water.

"Celeste, there's a place up the creek a ways, a place I used to go when I was younger, the springs where the creek begins. Let's walk on up there."

"Through the slimy old swamp. You must be kidding."

"The ground around the springs is all sand, high and dry."

"How do we go from here to there without getting all muddy?" she asked.

"Come on. I know a dry path all the way to the springs."

They took the catwalk around the outside of the pavilion. Paul did not wish to go back inside the crowded room. They walked on out through the parking lot, skirting puddles.

"Dammit, Paul. My shoes are going to be ruined. They're just covered with this mucky stuff already. This is stupid."

"Once we get out of the parking lot, we're okay."

He took her hand and they slipped into the pines at the far side of the parking lot. The marshy, wet ground grew solid, after they had walked about a hundred

yards, and a white sand logging road stretched out in front of them, straight, as far as they could see into the darkness.

"Come on," he said.

"It's so dark, Paul."

"Come on," "Moon's out. You can see fine."

She took his hand. The soft sibilance of the breeze in the pines was all around them and, as they walked, Paul tossed his head back and breathed deeply of the air blowing past. He resisted an urge to howl up at the moon. He wanted to run, to pull her by the hand and sprint ecstatically down the road, through the pines, which dipped and straightened in the wind. To run heedless to the springs.

Beside him, Celeste whimpered,

"Paul, my feet hurt."

She held onto his arm, as she took off one shoe and, with disgust, poured the white sand from it.

Some of her hair had come unglued and was hanging down in front of her face. She was shivering.

"Paul, this is silly. Why don't we just go back to the car and listen to the radio or something? Please."

"So Delisle's theory holds true for you after all," he said.

"What do you mean?"

He kissed her. Or something. And she tried, skillfully, without knowing that it would subside no matter what she did, to halt his fervor as it left him. And he knew the hopelessness, again.

"To the place where he lost it," Paul said, quietly. (I will lose something. Something must always be lost.)

And he resented her, now, for her tinsel name, and because her hair was obscene before the wind and the whiteness of the sand. She should not be here, now, with him. Her perceptions of everything, of his things, were colored in all the varying shades of finger nail polish. She belonged to another place, where boys and girls called each other "baby," a cosmetic place of cheerleaders and office gossip, and flashing lights, and rubber machines and backseat lovemaking.

And he resented her, because in his weakness, he had almost accepted all of this.

"Lost what, Paul? What have you lost?" she asked.

"Paul, let's go back. I'm so cold. In the car will be just as good. Nobody comes out to the parking lot during the dance."

He stared at her. She would never profane his shrine, where the waters flowed up from the crevices in the limestone.

Permit me this one time, he was thinking. One time whole and unblemished, one pure thing that I can grip tightly and remember when I cannot see or breathe for the silt, downstream.

"Paul, we could go to a motel, or somewhere. . ."

He looked, for a long time, down the straight white road. Then blaming her, he turned to her in anger.

III

A light showed in the house when Paul drove up. The front door was unlocked.

His father was in the living room, sitting with his head slumped back onto the padded edge of the chair. Paul hesitated, listening, before closing the door. His father's snoring was adenoidal and intermittent.

Paul closed the door and stood, for a long while, in the hallway, looking at his father, who seemed vulnerable and old, now, with his head rolled limply back that way. As if his neck were broken or something. The muscles in his face were relaxed and his mouth was open. The air rasped loudly in his nose and throat as he breathed.

The ice in the glass on the table had dissolved until the liquid was nearly clear, only slightly brown now.

Paul stared at the flaccid figure in the chair, whose strength had melted and flowed from him.

"A puppet," Paul thought. "He is a puppet whose strings have been cut one by one."

He was drawn toward his father, started to walk toward his father, but halted. He sought only to sleep, now, to plunge into sleep and drown the incongruities. He moved in front of the doorway on his way toward the stairs.

His father's head jerked upright. He blinked several times, slowly, and stared at Paul. Then, he was smiling.

"So you come home from your prowlin', huh?" His father's voice was slow and cottony.

Paul looked directly at him and the floor was pushing up hard against the soles of his feet.

"I guess you know your brother brought your girl home," his father said.

Paul stared, not moving, trying to interpret the smile.

"Delisle says she come haulin' tail outta the woods like she seen a bobcat."

His father reached for the glass on the table, looked into it, and faced his son again.

Paul waited, beyond fear and beyond caring now, ready to pay whatever price would be demanded for the purging he had had.

"Whataya have to say about that, son. She came flyin' into the parking lot. Delisle says she came outta the woods and. . ."

Paul answered quietly,

I guess everyone, . . . I guess you know how I feel

then. So there isn't any reason to talk about it. I just won't . . . I can't. . ."

"God damn. Delisle says she was cryin' and carryin' on. Said her hair was all over the place and. . ."

"I'm sorry that. . ."

His father laughed. He laughed and leaned forward to get up, but slumped back into the chair. Still laughing.

"I knew you was all right," he said. "There ain't nothing wrong with any boy of mine. You was just a slow starter, that's all. Once you got goin' you were more than she could handle, huh?"

His father winked slowly, with effort. Paul watched his eye squint shut; he saw the skin around his eye wrinkle grotesquely.

Paul started up the stairs.

"Yea. Me an' Delisle'll teach you the old technique

and they'll be no stoppin' you then. None of 'em will be safe around here any more with you an' Delisle on the loose."

His father was laughing to himself, now. He succeeded in getting to his feet.

"You want to have a little snort with me before you go to bed?" he asked.

And Paul knew that outside, in the night, the creek was coursing past. Around the cypress roots, the current was swirling, and the froth, from the stagnant pools in the shallows, was caught up and spun, around and around, in the whirlpools. Somewhere, a paper cup twirled on the dark water, in the shallows, among the roots. Or maybe it (a cup of paper and paraffin, colored blue and red on white) maybe it had flowed out into the big river, out onto the three mile-wide stretch of moonlit water. And Paul said,

"No."



Vicky White

The Sadness of A Simple Time

the sadness of a simple time
where the fasting lovers
play with their proverbial minds,
and the sky becoming childhood blue-green
in the cool, deceiving lucidity of
the wake of winter;
blares into drunken solitude,
shivering discipline,
right after
the dissention of gaiety
and right before the black
result of great hopes,
swinging between another death
in the painfully deified smell of
angelic clouds forcing a bitter belief:
then, the drugged life
of sincerity doubles itself up
in seeing the sun all over the roofs,
and the leaves rebelliously
plastered against the sky
and begs to be tempted no more
too many winters.

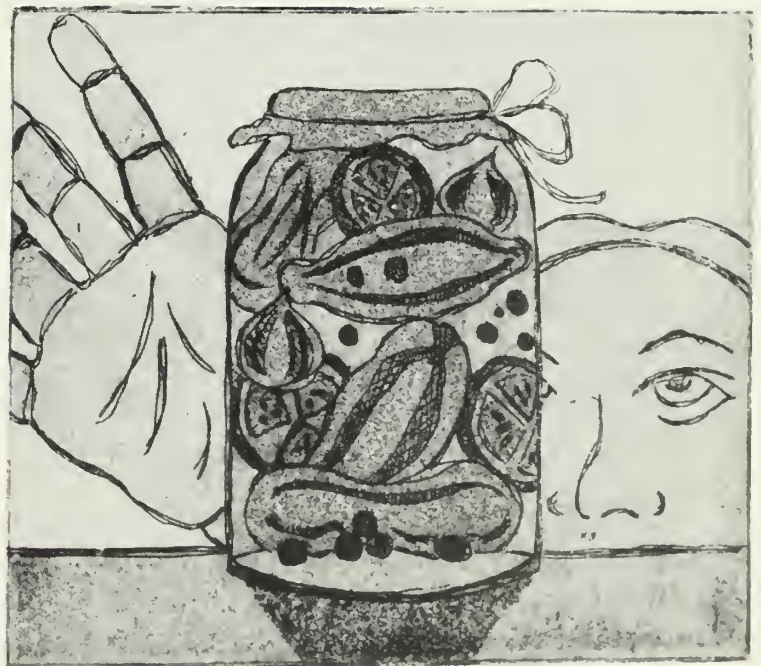
and claims nothing but its own,
and allows its transcend
for only a constantly and
wisely granted struggle
for the ecclesiastical absence
of polluted dreamwalks,
and wind all over the grass
and the mind contemplating quickly
more, no less,
before the supposed cliek
of the supposed way
stops round again,
before the sympathetic,
synickering clouds become
observed by the satalite again.
before the grass looks suburban.
before history recollapses flat
on its accordion stomach.
before novels seem contemporarily political.
in the lapse of a moment, the negligent second
of a system, the
sky pleads its slender, its unbelievable, cause.

Poem

Et Onan sanctam catholicam. . .
First words, first stone in a field
The child can barely see:
Where a spider has a stone house,
And what a golden cover
For the wheat topped earth.

She is her own pleasure
So softly softly often penitent
Like an imposeur priest of
Her ivy and petal thighs
And the moist ridge of loneliness
Below her belly's adapted eyes.

And the next step, when to take it,
If to, or not,
For what if there is no abyss, no infinite wall;
Nothing but a moderately pleasureable
Swell and swell and fall?



While the Band Played On

His parents would not be expecting him for five or six days yet and probably would be playing Scrabble or Canasta or watching high school basketball on TV. Randall Hilst was going home for Christmas, nervous, exhausted, not knowing how to explain his withdrawal from Amherst to his father, not knowing how to face his mother. He wanted to sleep. Boston was twenty-three hours behind him, somewhere far, misty, down snowy tracks. Think black, think black, he ordered himself, but his mind obstinately projected shades of green and blue, violet, purple, and all hues of an insomniac's rainbow. His mind was a firmament of the brightest stars. Randall shifted his weight on the train seat bristles but could find no comfort. His right arm was falling asleep apart from his mind. His right ear throbbed. A sharp pulse at the tip of his fingers annoyed him. He took a Lucky Strike from the pack and watched his nose and forehead light up orange in the window, reflected against evening blue, frosted, Indiana prairie. He thought about his months on Cape Cod and particularly that first week in October. Ocean, stars, sand, moon—the entire revelation. How it was impossible to go back to college. How it became necessary to go home.

He remembered how he had felt in October, standing on the weathered Clay Pound high above the Atlantic, isolated in the night. How the good reek of wet salt grass had rushed in with the surf, mingling with the freshness of bayberry, sassafras, beach plums. Lights had flashed on the dark sea from herring smacks. Luminous kelpweed, tangled in the waves, had tossed. If only Laura, his mother, could have been there. He would have shown her how through his eyes the whole revelation of ocean and wind, night and tide, assumed order, an imprint of his loneliness. While watching the foaming onrush of surf wash the sand, he had felt the wet breeze. He had seen clouds part and give birth to a halo around the moon. It had been an adequate sign for him—a sign of renewal. Momentarily, he had felt cleansed and at peace with the night. In Laura's continued physical absence, he had retreated to Cape Cod to submerge himself in beauty, to be alone with himself in another world made unreal by fog and mist. He could not return to Amherst, where empty words

only fostered memories of home. Randall missed Laura so much, always, remembering those afternoons last summer when they had walked lightly through spicy meadows and parks, stopping to pick blackberries and mint. And those late August nights in the old house when they had been alone. But then in October by the ocean, after all that futile passion of summer, a shape something like joy had filled the void from sea to sky before him. Laura would have seen the beauty in the sea and sky—just as he had seen, as a young boy standing hidden in her shadow, beauty in forest and city come to life through her eyes, in those magical first days, newspaper hat and wooden sword, now so long ago. She had read to him then, and he had proudly told his friends: "My mother, you know, is a poet. She really is." Years later, in college, Randall had begun to realize that his love for her had become so distorted, so vile. But even on Cape Cod, he had been unable to ignore her presence or deny his father's absence. She was with him always—in all his self-corrupted pleasures, undefinable but real. He heard the impossible melodies of that last summer everywhere: brassy music from the bandstand in the park, as it swelled faintly over familiar meadows; Laura's childish, warm laughter; bells and locusts and children's distant cries. At first, in October, Randall had thought he could forget her and the music of the summer, losing himself in the wild harmony of the sea, hiding himself in the thick blue fog which blankets those remote, lonely moors of the Cape. By December, he knew that he must go home. He would carry with him always those remembrances as carefully as a chalice brimming with bitter wine. And he would drink from the chalice devoutly, regretfully, timelessly.

"Leff-yett," the conductor announced at barely subsonic pitch. The James Whitcomb Riley Special tobaggoned into the Wabash river valley for its appointment at Lafayette, queen city of the Indiana hog belt. With a half-hearted, frozen toot and gasp, the Riley steamed toward more snowfields, Indianapolis, midnight, and Cincinnati, leaving Randall numbly alone by the tracks in descending, smoky snow. He hired a taxi and talked about the weather with the cabbie. His hair and Navy peacoat snowy, Randall approached the

house without confidence. What would she say? He entered without knocking, then stood in the hallway, disguised as a snowman, expressionless and motionless for a moment, as if he had forgotten his corn-cob pipe or was missing a coal button and was waiting for someone to repair him. His two sisters, Melissa and Jane, greeted their only brother with a ridiculous start, turned their attention from the Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, and ran to his sub-zero sides.

"Randy," trumpeted Melissa, who was seventeen, "what are you doing home so early?"

He hugged her and smiled into her happy eyes.

"Such an ungracious welcome," he began, unable to ignore a well-filled Purdue T-shirt and general scarcity of clothes beneath her unbuttoned nightrobe. "And for God's sake, Melissa, do you always sit around the house stark naked? You're getting to be a pretty big . . ."

He hesitated. Christ, Randall, he mumbled to himself, she's your own sister. What's wrong with you?

"Please, Randy, don't start in already," she pleaded, trying to laugh. "Just because you've been living with the Puritans out on Massachusetts Bay."

"O.K. I'm sorry." He started to kiss her, but Melissa turned away, uneasily. Of course, he thought, she can't help knowing about last summer. Randall remembered Melissa somewhere in his past, on rugged sunny days, a girl with strawberry braids, like Laura, and black, Sunday-School-polished shoes, always smiling. She had looked up to him almost as a guardian, clutching his arm at the road's end wood in the wake of lurching demons.

Randall had almost forgotten the soft girl enveloped by the left sleeve of his Navy peacoat. He kissed Jane's forehead. She was eleven.

"Tell us, Lord Randall," Jane said, giggling, "why you left college?"

He had been expecting the Lord Randall routine—the family's sole recourse to humor ever since his father had bestowed the slightly mocking title on him during the high-school era of Randall Hilst, number forty-three, starting forward for the Lafayette Jefferson Bronchos, clipping the nets at twenty-one points a game. Lord Randall had been on top of the small-town world then. He could have played college ball. That had been the last hope for a reconciliation with his father. Randall placed the wet peacoat in the hall closet with the grace and precision expected of a basketball prince and loped effortlessly across the living room with his last fan, Jane.

"I think Mama and Dad should be the first to hear of Lord Randall's final tumble from grace," he said.

"Besides, you'll be able to hear the repercussions all over the house. By the way, where are they?"

"They're in the basement, Randy, listening to early Benny Goodman," Melissa said.

"Why in the hell does he inflict that awful music on Mama? I bet they're playing Scrabble, aren't they?"

"Nope, Monopoly. With Gramma and the new neighbors, the Duttons. And Randy—"

"What?"

"Please don't start arguing with Dad again."

Randall crossed the living room and prepared emotionally for the gentle descent to the Monopoly board in the half-basement game room. As he approached the stairwell, the music scraped his ears with increasing shrillness. It was middle Benny Goodman—"Sing Me A Swing Song"—one of his father's favorites, along with "When Veronica Plays the Harmonica (down on the pier at Santa Monica)" by Kay Kyser's Campus Cowboys. Randall perched on the second carpeted stair above the linoleum floor, uncertain whether to blurt immediately an explanation for his withdrawal from college or wait until his father's barometric pressure could be approximated. One never knew the climate for discussion at the Hilst home. He was quite sure they hadn't heard—or seen for that matter—his delicate approach. On haunches he watched the self-conceived capitalists move their tokens aggressively around the Monopoly board.

Randall could not see his mother, hidden from view by Mrs. Dutton's large volume. He observed the full complexity of Mrs. Dutton's flipped, glazed, teased, and perhaps baked, hairdo. Regularly she pierced the persistent big band sound with high-decibel-range giggling, suggesting, to Randall, an inner-obesity as well. Her husband, seated across from her, responded to her shrill laughter with generous, well-spaced, Tennessee chuckles. Randall wasn't sure if he was from Tennessee, but Mr. Dutton laughed with distinctively drawled chuckles, elongated. Randall looked over to his father, who appeared well-pleased with the mad tunes from Benny's compulsive clarinet. He looked older but not wiser: firm civil-engineer jaw, greying Hoosier crewcut, stocky physique. In many ways, his father was as midwestern as apple butter, chore time, and hayrides down along the Wabash during Harvest Moon. Gramma Hilst sat in the corner, rocking silently. She was one of the few consistencies in all the wild turnings of the universe. Randall was fascinated with the proceedings. He had almost forgotten the Armageddon awaiting him at the card table. Mr. Dutton, reaching for the ash tray, noticed Randall poised in his ridiculous crouch.

"Who is that?" Mr. Dutton asked, somewhat nervously.

Randall's father, embarrassed, stood up from his perch above Marvin Gardens on the Monopoly board and introduced Randall to the Duttons, Donald and Emily. Randall's voice, for the moment, assumed an apologetic overtone, stating that he was sorry to interrupt the festivities. His father's face flashed stern, his eyes red. Randall kissed Gramma and was kissed by his mother, who asked why he hadn't phoned to say that he'd be home early.

"I thought I'd surprise you," Randall said, looking at Laura. She was pale and had lost weight. Her face was puffy, but slightly lifted and unruffled, her glance directed calmly inward. She was still attractive in her early forties, but Randall remembered photographs of Laura in her teens, when she had been lovely and had wanted to become an actress. Then she had married Samuel Hilst, eleven years her senior, and was happy for a short time. Even now, Randall thought her light reddish hair beautiful, reminding him of wheat in autumn sun.

"Your father tells me you were quite a basketball star in your day," Mr. Dutton intruded, with good intentions.

"Mediocre," Randall said.

"Nonsense," Mr. Hilst interrupted, "basketball is the only thing Randall ever worked at—that is, of course, until last summer." His father's eyes gleamed coldly. "What would Lord Randall wish for alcoholic refreshment?"

"Just a shot of White Mule and Jackass Brandy, if that's not too much trouble," Randall said, refusing to take second place in the duel of wits. The Duttons failed to laugh but squirmed in their chairs. Randall pulled a chair adjacent to the card table, seated himself. "I didn't mean to break up the conversation."

Laura spoke. "Samuel, can't we silence Benny Goodman for awhile and speak to our son? And Randall, you'll have to make do with Scotch and water."

Randall's father was in the mood for music, and he decided to let Benny and his wild band wail into the night. Mr. Dutton, sensing the uneasiness of the situation, suggested that he and Emily depart.

"Nonsense," Randall's father said—he loved that word—"I'm sure Randall appreciates the chance to talk with someone other than his father. Now what were we talking about? We'll finish the Monopoly later."

"Race riots," Mrs. Dutton provided, "but really, we are plumb tired and . . ."

"Ah, race riots!" His father was in high gear now. "It just seems to me that the coloreds have been getting too much as it is. As far as I'm concerned, they can all go back to their tree-huts in the Congo . . ."

His father's voice droned onward toward midnight. Laura returned from the bar with Randall's drink. Randall smoothed his hair, drank the Scotch, and drifted in thought. It could not be denied that old Sam was fully conversant in the affairs of the world. Randall looked again toward Laura, who had seated herself at the card table. She did not glance at him but looked instead over Samuel's head toward the window. She seemed so willing to resign herself to his father's banality, to the stupid games he insisted on playing. Randall remembered her seated at the desk in the breezeway, many years ago, with Sam at his office, her hair brightened by gentle wind carrying sun, oak leaves falling on the terrace, eddying. Randall would sit by her side in the old Morris chair, reading about David Copperfield, talking about other days—days that must come soon—when they could leave this God-forsaken town. Laura wanted to go back to Old Lyme on Long Island Sound, where she had been born, to be close to the sea and the theater and white-steepled towns, to a place where people talked about things other than the hog index. "You see, Randall," she would say, "your father and I are so different. I love him and God knows he's a good provider, but we can't even talk to each other anymore. He doesn't understand my longing. And his friends, my God, they're so empty. Your father's idea of a good time is to play Scrabble or Ping-Pong on Saturday night with a group of civil engineers and their idiotic wives. You're the only one I can talk to, Randall. Sometimes I want to pack my clothes and just run for my life." Randall would say that he'd go with her, away from Lafayette, away toward beauty and excitement, toward another and better day.

Randall's drifting thoughts were interrupted by his mother's voice. Laura, obviously bored with the civil rights conversation, pointed the talk in another direction.

"Why did you leave school, Randall? Your grades haven't been that good, but surely you didn't flunk out." She turned away from him after asking the question. Randall's father stared at him. The bugles of Armageddon resounded.

"Well, Mama, I can't stand the college. It's so childish. Remember the games the sandlot gang used to play with chalk on building walls—the eternal war between Kilroy and Groovis? That's serious stuff compared to college games. Tasseled shoes, MG's, grain alcohol. . . . I mean it, all these kids want to do is

write the definitive sophomore chronicle of the Millard Fillmore years or the first foolproof term paper on Cooper's *Prairie*. Don't you see how nonsensical it all is?"

Randall knew his words had a false ring. He had flung himself into college life with the abandonment only a lonely, confused person can muster. My God, I can drink, he would say, floundering in a sea of hops and barley, tripping over his roommate, plunging dismally into the comfort of sleep. He had been a fool to choose a college so far from home.

"So you went to Cape Cod. Why?" Laura asked.

"I'm not sure. I just had to get away from all the empty words and empty books and empty people. You know what I mean, Mama, I just wanted to run. I stood there on the Clay Pounds above the ocean, frightened by the loneliness of the night beach, listening to the metallic cry of gulls, the dry noise of moving sand. Christ, I was happy—for the first time since last summer. Everything seemed so clear. I felt that this was the beauty of life, not the monotone grumblings of tweedy people. I couldn't go back to Amherst. That's all there was to it."

But Randall knew that was only half the story. Sure, he sought shelter in the harbor rain at Provincetown. And that first night, he walked barefooted in the cold sand, trailing phosphorescence, dust of stars, as he shuffled, dreaming of Grecian fleets. But the days after that became all the same. Walking through green fables by day, down to the harbor rocks, watching fiddler crabs at low tide sprint to the darkest sand coves. At night, in the backwater of silence, searching for the candelit window, smoky chamber, Mary or Alice, the receptive ear and responsive eye, warm flesh, wine, all the pleasures of the harbor. Yet always the vague loneliness. Always the persistent question—who do you wish were here—over and over. Always. Thoughts of home. Thoughts of Laura and past summer nights and mornings of ancient sunny time.

"This may be my cynical decade or cynical eon or whatever." Randall said, "but most of the people I know—at Amherst, in Indiana, and by other Monopoly boards all over the crazy earth—are just god-damned unhappy."

Mrs. Dutton, who had been drinking merrily, felt compelled to take exception. "You can laugh," she said, with unexpected precision, "but I loved Ohio State and tweedy people and even such crazy things as the Charleston. Loose elbows and knees, bracelets jangling, feet and beads flying. It doesn't make much sense, but brother it was fun!"

"Maybe I'm just too cynical," Randall replied.

"You're an ungrateful, spoiled brat," his father said.

After an unbearable stretch of silence, Randall's father asked if anyone would care for another walnut, adding, in a flustered tone, "Tell me, Don, what are the chances for the White Sox in the spring?"

"Sam," Mr. Dutton began, "did you ever see Babe Ruth? Well, I did and I cried, 'Babe, hit one for me.' And by George, he did. Right out of ol' Comiskey Park over the Pepsi-Cola sign. Just as sure as I'm Don Dutton. I remember it as distinctly as the Dempsey-Tunney fight. Now that was something . . ."

While the men pursued great moments in sports, Mrs. Dutton spoke to Laura about her sinuses, Errol Flynn, and her career as a radio commercial announcer. Randall heard her say that she'd been runner-up in an audition to the girl who eventually became Miss Olive Palmer, the Palmolive girl.

Randall could not understand why Laura so completely ignored him now. Those days and nights last summer—how clearly he could see them. All summer, he and Laura had walked over blackberry fields, the fields, the clear reality of days flowing into dreamlike images. Isolated glimpses of towers and poplars and black boys balancing themselves on train rails in the milky summer dusk of full moon. Laura would carry oranges and apples, berries and candy in a small straw basket, and she and Randall would laugh with nougat and licorice smiles. They would lie on their dream heath, celebrating the visual hymn to summer, watching the world turn upside down, the sky below, feeling themselves fall into the universe. Distant tuncs billowed from the bandstand, steeple bells, and farm children shouting deep in play. Randall thought of himself as Casey, waltzing the strawberry blonde across a timeless sky, while the band played on. And the nights: oaks and moon interwoven, the pale green brilliance of a Luna moth weaving through shadows. Sam would go to bed early, and Randall and Laura would sit up late into the night, talking about other days. They would speak constantly about the future, about magical ports of call where they could go together, wands in hand, sailing away passionately on an antique clipper ship. They understood each other so uniquely. The fire would soar, and they would embrace, talking the night down to dawn, fire to ashes, over coffee and bourbon. She loved him more than she could ever love Samuel. Randall knew that must be true. But there had been moments of doubt and shame. Embarrassed by their searching talks, Laura would rise from the sofa to watch moths encircle the Japanese lanterns on the terrace. Yet there had been something

between them all summer, just as there was something vague, indecent, undefinable through all the years. As a boy of eight or so, he would sit in her bedroom while she dressed to go out. "Do you think I'm beautiful, Randall?" she'd ask, smiling. "I should have been in pictures, like Hedy Lamar." He would nod affirmatively. Throughout his youth, he had gone on picnics with Laura. They rode horses and drove out to the ball-park to watch the Lafayette Red Sox host Keokuk or Dubuque. On to the amusement park. The carousel with pink horses, blue horses, gold horses, all drowning in heat waves and happy calliope tunes. Then to the Ferris Wheel and a view of the entire park, unable to distinguish Laura from the other midgets far below, running from the ride, crying. "Oh, Mama, I couldn't see you anywhere."

That's it, Randall thought, relive all the dead memories, seasons of cotton candy and meadows and somehow love. Come into the house on a snowy day, with snow in your fly, and tell Mama that your daddy is an old buffoon. Hear her laugh and watch her bring you hot tea with an orange slice. Laugh again on a sunny day in the meadow, hold her hand, watch winds brighten her hair. Can you hear the band? Blame the old man for everything. Bless him with unearned hatred. Tell him to go shove his football. After all, these are only the casual acts of innocent childhood. But haven't they become unbearably vile? Randall wondered. And Laura? She doesn't seem to care now.

Randall heard an untamed arpeggio on Benny Goodman's clarinet and was gently lowered again into the conversation.

"Haven't you anything to add, Randall?" his father asked. "You used to be so gung-ho about politics. That's all you talked about. For awhile you thought J.F.K. was Lincoln, Cronwell, and Christ all rolled into one."

"I guess I don't think about it too much, Dad. It just seems that nothing matters really."

"You don't think about it too much. Did you hear that, Don? This is my son from college. He doesn't think about it much," Mr. Hilst replied, "Is that so?"

"That's so," Randall said.

"What do you think about then?"

"I'm not—"

"Leave him alone, Samuel," Laura said.

Mrs. Dutton who, by this time, was sinking ungraciously in her Bloddy Mary, commented, "You've just got the blues, son. We used to have a song—sing hallelujah, hallelujah, and you'll shoo your blues away."

"We'd really better be going," Mr. Dutton added quickly.

Randall's father spoke. "My son is an ass."

"Goodnight, folks," Mr. Dutton said. "We'd really better be going."

Grammaw Hilst who, until this moment, had dawdled silently in her rocker, reading, looking at spider webs, entered the conversation. "I think Randall needs a good dose of Scott's Emulsion. It'll bring the dimples back."

"He needs a lot more than that," Randall's father said.

"Well, goodnight," Mr. Dutton said, emphatically, rising, tugging with him his wife, who was singing, in some unknown key, "Another season, another reason, for makin whoopee."

"I'm going to hit the hay too," Mr. Hilst commented. "I'm sure Randall and his mother have much to talk about without the burden of an unwanted presence. Isn't that so, Randall?"

"There are so many things you don't understand, Dad."

Mr. Hilst looked at Randall, his eyes squinting. "You're an ungrateful son-of-a-bitch."

"Shut up," Randall shouted.

His father slapped him across the face and left the room with the Duttons and Grammaw.

Randall and Laura were alone, as they had been last summer, as they had been for so many years. He turned off the phonograph, placed a hand over the red imprints on his cheek, and gazed through Laura's light blue eyes toward oaks silhouetted by moon against windows, terrace walls. The seasons had changed. No moths played near the lights, only snow, illuminated as it fell. Japanese lanterns had been exiled to the attic for winter. The corners of the windows were frosted. He adroitly plucked a walnut from the bowl near Laura's hand.

"You've been so silent tonight," he said.

"It's your father, Randall. Can't you see that?"

"I'm afraid not."

"When he first heard you were coming home, he tried so hard to be optimistic, enthusiastic. He reminisced about your days as a basketball player and kept talking about a fresh start. But as soon as you arrive, he becomes bitter again."

Laura raised a hand as quickly as pain to her forehead. Randall was silent for a moment. He had not expected such a reversal.

"So it's all my fault," he said. "What about last summer, Laura? That's what I'd like to know. All those words—tender words, painful words. On Cape Cod that's all I thought about. I hear the echoes everywhere—that's why I came home."

"You must forget about the summer—you must—and you've got to be kind to him, Randall. Couldn't you say anything decent to him in front of his friends? Must you infect everything with hate?"

Randall watched the wind push oak limbs against the window, the limbs etching irregular patterns on the frost. "I hate walnuts and I hate Monopoly," he began, "and I hate this circular way of talking that our family seems to thrive upon. All we talk about is other days. Days past when Samuel sweated his guts out in the Kokomo paper mill. Future days when Laura will run to the Lost Continent and be crowned Queen of the Eternal May. When? When in God's name are we going to stop talking?"

Her thoughts were concealed, a strand of red hair fell forward across her breast. She stared at the toy cannon, toy iron, miniature auto—all tokens in the Monopoly game. Her hands twirled the tip of her cigarette to a pencil point.

"I've been selfish, Randall. You can see that, can't you? Last summer means nothing. I'm unhappy—there's no denying that—and I lost control of myself." She hesitated. Her hands moved the toy iron three spaces. "You see, you must simply forgive an unhappy old woman who loves you very much as my son. But it must stop there. God help us, it's too awful any other way."

"After all the years, after all the words, I just don't understand. No, I don't see. Why this sudden wisdom? And how in the hell do I escape this neurosis? That's what it is, Laura. What else can it be? And here's the sad part. I meet girls, attractive girls, intelligent girls—some of them I really like. But I find myself comparing all of them to you, and I don't know why. There is someone, somewhere, who needs me. Isn't that amusing?"

Laura rose from her chair and went to the window, drawing a face on the moist glass. "I can't help you, Randall. I'm just not strong enough. I get aggravated with your father and talk big about running away, but I love him. I must. And you cannot love me without loving him. That's the way it's going to have to be." She tried to smile. "For once I'm lost for words. I've just got to go to bed and comfort my husband. We can talk things over tomorrow." She kissed him on the forehead and left.

Randall sat in the empty room, lonely room, lonely like the moors at dusk. It was completely silent. He remembered Laura coming into the living room late at night last August, saying, "That's the kind of party your father likes. Gray people talking about gray things. How pathetic. I've got to run soon or it will be too late. You've got to help me, Randall."

Sure, help you. You know, Randall, he thought, your father is right. You're an ass. You've been one for a long time. But how do you displace this lingering taste in the mouth like bitter wine? How do you diminish these remembrances? Moths and carousels, the loneliness of the night harbor, all these distortions of love. "That's the way it's going to have to be," he said softly, to himself, climbing the stairs.

Melissa was still seated in front of the television, watching the midnight news from Indianapolis. She didn't speak as Randall sat down beside her. The hog index was down. American men were dying at Con Thien.

"Maybe I'll join the Army," Randall said, "if I'm not drafted first. After all, Jolson, Hope, and Benny all for free." He lit a cigarette.

"You're not funny," Melissa said. "You know that Dad went to bed enraged."

"So everything's my fault all of a sudden. Is that it?"

Melissa was silent, her face flushed with shame and anger. "No one was going to tell you, but I've got to." She spoke softly but directly, with damp eyes. "The doctor had to come and pump pills out of Mama's stomach in November. If you'd been here you'd have vomitted, Randall. . . . No one knows but Dad and me—and Mama—and now you."

Randall felt dizzy from too many cigarettes, too much Scotch. He stared at the TV but saw nothing.

"You hurt, Randall Hilst," Melissa said, "You really hurt."

Isolated glimpses of a past summer flickered quietly in his mind. In the silence he heard faint tunes from a summer bandstand, impossible melodies, vibrant but sad, sad like the farm boys deep in play, unaware of bitter days ahead. Once again he saw a ballet of windy meadows and swallowtails, and he wondered if the meadows would thaw in the spring. And he heard Laura's voice, far off at first, like a train miles before the trestle: "You've got to help me, Randall." It became increasingly loud.

"Is my motorcycle still in the garage?" he asked Melissa, who was crying.

"I guess so."

"I'm sorry, Melissa, I really am," he said, putting his arm around her. "You shame me."

Through the cigarette smoke which hovered over them and curled around Melissa's strawberry hair, Randall could see the keel of the crescent moon reflected in the ocean below the Clay Pounds, somewhere distant from Indiana, beyond the sad farms and oppressive oaks, somewhere near dusk and renewal at the end of tomorrow's journey.

Marsha Poirier

Carapace

I wear a carapace beneath crepe paper skirts,
An armored skin that no bitch jackal
Can nose my secret underbelly.
Sea turtles, except they meet soup-catchers,
Use such defense and live for centuries,
And garden snails, except too slow
For garçons in short pants bearing pails of salt.
The fire ant's safer, or have you bit on formic?
Better to risk the heel of the Philistine
Than tremble, brain retracted, in faint security.

Stephen Karver

Revolution after revolution we find the unworld

Revolution after revolution we find the unworld
after us, trailing.
There is no room to run to in this house
where he will not follow,
stick his foot in the door,
force his way in and
convince us to buy his whole line
of cheap goods—from rotted fruit to bad prophylactics.
Our saviour is the sly salesman himself,
for the unworld undoes itself.

Weekend Home

This was the day she'd planned over and over, so that now it had come, it was like a present she'd poked and peered into, and maybe ruffled the paper once too much, and she was afraid to let it begin. Her sister would be there, beautiful Louise, whose hair streamed down so clean and smooth, you fairly begged it to stop, but it never did. And her eyes. Why was it some people got the large doe eyes you could drown in, and others didn't, but could only watch, and know how they would let the lids fall lazy half way, half sleeping, if they only had them. She wasn't jealous; you weren't jealous after twenty years of watching. You gave in and loved her.

Jeremy Round drove over the rough dirt road that hadn't been used since last weekend, when her father had come, like he always did, to feed the horses, and feel strong and young on the land he owned, all to himself, where Mother couldn't tell him to leave the kitchen, that she could clean up much faster with him out of the way, and he would go up to their room, and read the papers and the magazines til sleep. Tasha'd given him up, along with the rest, to Louise. There was only one hard night, when she was still young, and had cried in her pillow til it was all wet, and the knot in her chest had gone away. After that she could watch them, and be happy for them, and even laugh when her father called her Julia that time, not Natasha, or even Louise, but Julia. And who'd ever heard of any Julia.

Her heart thumped oddly in her breast, as they neared the turn-off, as though it might take leave of her and dart free way out in the sky with the doves that flickered like tiny bits of ash blown up from some hidden brush fire along the road.

"Hey, wish I'd brought my gun; those're doves up there." Jeremy thrust his curly head through the window in genuine disappointment.

"Daddy'd shoot you, if you did." Tasha laughed at the thought of her father running across the open field to prevent him.

"You're not scared are you, to meet him?"

"Course not." Jeremy inflated his chest to show his daring.

"Hey, here's the turn-off."

He swung the car into the road, the tires catching in the dry autumn dirt, swerving the car gently from side to side, like in a boat, til it grasped firmer ground. The turn-off led to a cedar cause-way over a marshy spot she and Louise called the End. There, blackberries grew, up close to the marsh, and the moss hung low from the oaks, so you could sit up close to the gray trunks, and not be seen, like behind dusty curtains, and eat the berries alone. Then they came to the circle, the road rounding a wild garden of easter lillies and daffodiles, that were buried now, in October, in silky bulbs underground. The little white house, with turquoise shutters, was on the far side of the circle.

"There's one car. They must have beat us. You aren't scared, now, Jer?"

"Me?" He laughed.

Louise was slumped in the swing that hung from the oak beside the porch, her arms linked about the chains at the elbow, her head dropped on her chest, silver hair floating down. It caught in the wind, as she swung back and forth, like the free ends of spider webs.

"There she is."

Jeremy looked at Louise through the window, and Tasha thought she saw a frown begin to form on his forehead. "She's most as pretty as you."

"Yeah." Tasha was out of the car the minute it stopped.

"Hey, Louise, come meet Jeremy."

Louise jumped lightly from the swing, and walked toward them. Jeremy had gotten out and was standing by the car. He went to meet her, held out his hand, which she took.

"Well, finally. Tash's told me all about you. Come on in."

She led him to the porch of the house, and Tasha followed.

"Where's Mom and Pop?"

"In the creek. Are you hungry?" she asked Jeremy. He turned to Tasha, shrugging.

"Well, we had something earlier."

"He's always hungry." Tasha picked a twig from the cedar tree at the foot of the steps, crushing it in her

hand, smelling it, for something to do. There had been no real reason to bring him here.

"Great. I baked a cake for Daddy, but he doesn't like cake. So, maybe you'd like some." She rested her large brown eyes on his face, and Tasha thought he couldn't help feeling faint. It was almost unfair to him, to make him see them.

"Sure, if Tasha wants some. What're you doing, Tash?"

"Just smelling this. You go on in. I want to get some stuff out of the car."

She turned her back on them; she could go down to the End for a while, though the blackberries were over. She walked along the leaf covered road, her feet making their dry shuffle in the brittleness. Underneath her favorite oak, she sat, wondering what she was doing, running off, almost. She just did it, that's all, like jumping off the deep end of the pool, to make sure you could swim. The moss hung about her, sheltering, glooming the spot, so the sun dropped its gold in diamond patches. The marsh breeze parted the gray tendrils, like silent hands in hair, shaking bits of dust on her cheeks and lashes.

"Tasha," Jeremy was calling.

"O. K. I'm just at the End."

She brushed the moss aside, running back to the house. Her cheeks blazed from the wind and the run, and tears squeezed from the corners of her eyes. When she reached the porch, Jeremy had gone back in, so he hadn't really wanted her. Maybe Louise had told him to call. The old wooden steps sank beneath her feet, caving imperceptively inward, toward the dark underside of the boards, riddled with old termite holes, now dried. Even the summer's dirt daubers had deserted their nest under the blue-green eave, perhaps leaving the remains of some petrified fly all swathed with silver thread inside. She opened the door to the small front room, that took up three quarters of the house. Jeremy was kneeling on the brick hearth, trying to start a fire, with Louise bent over, watching.

"Hi. Where'd you go?" she asked, handing him the lighter fluid.

"Oh, over to the End."

"I haven't been over there in an age. Remember when we used to smoke rabbit tobacco under that tree?"

"What's rabbit tobacco?" Jeremy tilted his head over one shoulder toward Louise.

"Listen to him. What's rabbit tobacco? Where've you been all your life?"

"I guess I just haven't lived, huh? Til I have some of this stuff?" Tasha glared at him. He couldn't be flirting with her, that would be too much.

Louise threw her head back and the clearest sound, like bells, trickled from her throat, ballooned out, until she shook with laughter. A spray of hair fell over her eyes. Jeremy laughed once, glancing at Tasha.

"What is it, Tash?"

"It's a weed children around here roll in funny paper and get ill on." Her words quenched her sister's laughter.

"Oh, Tash, you used to love it. Why, you'd smoke it way longer than me, when Daddy was stalking nearer, and I was already packing my mouth with gum."

Tasha looked at her pretty mouth, remembering that she really had stuffed it with gum, though she couldn't picture her quite doing it now.

Jeremy's fire caught low beneath the stout pieces of kindling, shyly licking the pine logs on top. The three of them waited, hushed, for the flame to seize them permanently.

"Not bad," Louise said to no one in particular.

Jeremy leaned back on the hearth, admiring his work.

"Well, I was a scout for a couple of years." Tasha thought he looked rather like a puppy stroked unexpectedly.

"Did you have your cake?"

"No, I figured I'd wait for the rest." She smiled at him. The heat of the fire ate slowly away at the chilly air, warming her, like a long hot bath after a cold day in the open. Louise slouched, musing on the sofa, her large eyes filled with the liquid vacancy that comes from staring at fires, or old letters whose writing's been changed by time into the faintest of blue veins inscribing the transparent sheet. Tasha found it in her heart to forgive her sister for everything; she thought she might even be strong enough to give her Jeremy. His brown hair shone gold in the fire light, as though it were the only light in the room, and it was black night just beyond the door, and they, the three of them, were the only people in the world. It would be a beautiful gift indeed. But even as she thought these things, a bitterness crept into her chest, and curled up in the bottom, like some dog in a dry well that means to stay the night. She knew it was tears, and the same knot that had grown there when she was little and Louise had stolen her father away, pieee by piece, until she was only left with a skeleton for a father, that she couldn't talk to, or touch. Not this time, she thought; this time she would fight, and if she lost, it would be gloriously.

"Jeremy, are you asleep?"

He raised his head to this hand, leaning on his elbow.

"Nope."

"I'm just about." Louise yawned her little yawn that meant life is boring.

Tasha pierced her to the heart with sullen eyes, which probably would have brought on the hurt, innocent look she knew so well, if her head had not been turned still toward the fire.

"Let's walk down to the creek." She jumped up, opened the door, and ran down the steps without waiting for Jeremy to answer. If he didn't come, too bad. She would just know all the sooner.

The sky was the palest of blues, speckled with tiny dots of cloud, like the thin cream-blue egg shells in their attic that they, Louise and she, had found one summer, all nested in the white tissue paper. Pick one up as gently as you could, and it would still crack, spoiling right in your hand. Jeremy caught up with her as she leaned down to pick a dandelion.

"Well, how did I do?"

She blew the grey fuzz in one breath, for luck, watched the wind lift it, and sail it across the brown field.

"How did you do what?"

"I mean, did I make the right impression?"

"Why don't you ask Louise?" Her voice sounded harsh in the cold, empty air. She felt as though they had been through this before, like when you see a blue-jay flutter in green branches, but don't notice really, until it flutters again, and then you have that feeling, like a dream. She was taking him to meet her father.

They walked silently toward the creek, brown shambles of dead vines pulling at their feet, slowing them, until they reached the clay path, where the black beetles rolled balls of dry dung into their holes, blocking the grainy openings.

"Her eyes were black as a beetle's back."

"What?" Jeremy reached for her hand, but she thrust it in the pocket of her coat, and shuddered before the wind that flung itself over the field from the marsh.

"Oh, nothing."

"Look, Tash, I didn't come all the way out here just to meet your family. Can't we have fun, too?"

She shrunk away from him, into the collar of the, coat, away from the egg-shell sky. To be in a shell would not be hard; it would crack at a breath, at a wish.

"I'm sorry, Tash. Forgive me?"

She knew how to pull herself in, like a snail, when she needed to.

"Remember what you told me once about a man

that shot his dog 'cause he was liking it too much? Was it true?"

"No."

She stopped and sat on the hard earth beneath the pecan tree, the one you could climb in and see your father in the creek, though it seemed so far away, with his white shirt blowing like a flag through the green marsh. The nuts rotted in their shells where they had fallen, not firm and green like on the tree, but cracked and dark as dirt, and only dust inside. She looked at him close, and through him, to the back of his head where the brown hairs stuck out and wouldn't stop curling no matter what he did to them. Then he pushed her back, pinning her arms gently to the ground. The world spun round and round with her so close to it, she spun too, and would never stop, till the whole thing did, and then it wouldn't matter. He kissed her.

"So. You gonna talk now?"

She sat up, brushing the dead grass from her coat and hair. It was limp grass, and if you sucked it, there was no juice, like in spring, when it stained your mouth, and you tasted the greenness, trying to whistle through the slit.

"Can you do this?" She put her lips to one brown blade, that had already split on its own.

"It's too dry."

"Well, can you do it with two fingers? Father can whistle a mile with these two." She showed him the right ones.

"Nope."

"To bad," she said, looking out over the field, to the sky, to the woods on the other side. A lone ibis flew up from the creek bed, its voice aching on the wind. She and Louise had found an ibis once on its side in the marsh. A dead one, heavier than you might think, and not so beautiful as in the air, when it cleft the blueness, all wings. They'd washed the black mud off, and the tiny hard knot of blood on the beak.

"And why do they smell when they die, Jer, like it was something unnatural to do, to die? Birds, I mean."

He waited a moment, undecided. She wouldn't talk, even now.

"I don't know."

She jumped up, and started on toward the creek, with him following, like a dog on a hunt, that might be getting tired, with no game all morning.

"We smell, too, when we die. The hairs on your head so curly now will fall to dust, and would blow away like a dandelion, if it could, and weren't kept under there."

"Are you worried Louise and I won't get along?"

He looked away, to the grey tree trunks on the edge of the field, afraid, but wanting to know.

"Won't get along?" she said.

"Yeah."

"No. I don't think I ever thought of that."

"Then, what's the matter? You're acting like a kid, Tash."

"Maybe I am."

They had come to the end of the field. Before them the narrow creek snaked towards the river, brown-green, twisted, disappearing around a bend; then only the marsh spread out, its huge moving wings of gold reaching to the river beyond.

"There's Bird Key."

His eyes followed where she pointed—a pure white sand cliff rearing its point on the horizon at the end of the marsh.

"Some kind of bird goes there to nest every year."

"I like it." She slipped her arm through his, letting her mind unwind, forgetting Louise, everything, for a moment. Then the purr of a motor suddenly entered the air, like a visitor, unannounced.

"That's Pop."

"You call him Pop?"

"No, Father."

"O.K."

They slid down the rutty embankment to the boat landing, the cold sand giving way with their weight. The boat appeared round the bend as they reached the creek. Her father sat in the back of the small outboard, looking regal in his army surplus jacket. He waved, slowly curved the boat in the middle of the creek, and ran it ashore. Jeremy steadied it while he climbed out, and they hauled it up together.

"Glad to see you made it."

"Father, this is Jeremy Round." Jeremy was a head taller than he, she noticed, as they shook hands.

"How do you do, Sir."

"Fine, just fine. Natasha check that gas for me." She pulled the handle on the motor shut. The whole thing, the gasoline smell, the empty coffee cans for bailing, the grey tennis shoes—that was her father.

"What's that?" She pointed to a brown lump under the seat.

"Dead hen." He pulled the marsh hen out by the feet. "Ever see one of these before?" He offered the mishapen bird to Jeremy.

"No, Sir."

"Good eating bird." He rummaged around in the boat, picking up a rope, the shoes.

"Is it marsh hen season?" Tash asked, to show some interest.

"Well, now, I figure it's my bird. One won't hurt anybody." He nodded to Jeremy.

"No, Sir."

"Natasha, back the car over here."

"I'll get it." He tossed the keys to Jeremy, and went back to unloading the boat—the gun, the paddles. Tasha felt nervous, like she always did along with him, as though she were guilty of something.

"Where's mother?"

"Dropped her at the Pinkney's up the creek. We'll pick her up on the way home."

She picked up the paddles and placed them carefully in the trunk. Jeremy came around and helped with the other things.

"Here's the keys, Sir."

"O.K. I guess that's it."

They drove back to the house in utter silence. Tasha stared at the back of her father's head. She knew it by heart, the red neck, the lowest thin hairs, the full curve of the back, the abrupt top. It was like a special cup your mother might show visitors, but you dared not touch, for fear it would break, and you trembled just looking at it in the cupboard. Yet she had touched it, she must have, a long time ago, almost before she could remember. She'd sat on his chest in the big bed, with her mother there, too, and the sheets smelling crisp, and she'd kissed him. But now they drove in silence, and he was strange, for all his nearness. She reached out to Jeremy and pulled a knot of his hair, coiling it once around her finger, until she knew he felt it, though his face, like her fathers looked ahead across the autumn field.

The car made the circle, past the End to the house. Louise came out on the porch to meet them. She hugged her father, hanging on his arm up the steps and through the door. They might have been an old, old couple, she thought, who lean on each other, but have forgotten what the feel of real flesh and bone and hair can be—all that burnt up long ago, and blown away up some sooty chimney. She grabbed Jeremy before he crossed under the turquoise eave of the porch.

"Jer, let's not go in just yet."

"I don't mind, Tash."

"I know; but let's not, I'll race you."

She took off across the field, toward the woods, running as hard as she could, till she felt she would fall, the ground flashed by so fast. He passed her laughing, and she thanked something deep inside of her for him. They stopped at the foot of the woods, breathing wildly, and laughing at each other until it hurt.

"You've got tears in your eyes."

"So do you." She dropped to the ground. The

wind had built ridges with the dots of cloud, cracking the sky, bringing it closer, so you could almost touch it.

"I'm just too much for you, Tash." He tumbled beside her, touched her hair.

"You like me better than Louise?"

"Better than Louise? Whoever said I liked Louise?"

But she wasn't thinking of Louise just then; she was thinking of herself, and of how anyone could lose

their father, let him slip away, piece by piece, for no reason in the world.

"Forgive me for today?"

"Sure," he said, and together they sat beneath the leafless oaks, waiting for their breath to calm, waiting for the last dove to flicker in the cold October sky when they would go back to the house and the last warmth of the fire he'd built there.

Chamblee Owen

Quick and Weary Game

I am no gambler and quickly told you
No I would not play could not surely do
This quick and weary game.

You laughed, spread tarot cards over me—
"Look your golden eyes have made you free
Saved will be your name."

You were dealer and sure you had a heart
While green blood riot in my frozen hand
Breath spent for your whisper

(The cold day rings sad in the iced-down trees
And in the lean light naked shadows freeze
Cause I care to risk her)

I tried a last and gallant measure:
Strength—"I cannot search for sunk treasure
Neath any gilded sea."

And your briefest hand brushed touch and go
Quiet queen burnished bright to let me know
Concupiscence leads me.

AD INDEX

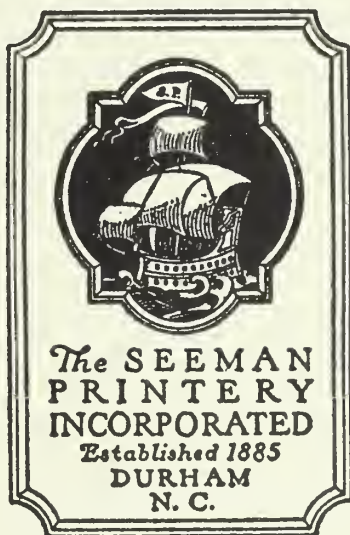
Duke Barber Shop.....	28
Duke Dining Halls.....	1
Duke Laundry.....	4
Duke Press.....	2nd cover
Duke Stores.....	2
Ivy Room.....	2
Seeman Printery.....	3rd cover
West Side Pharmacy.....	2

Duke University Barber Shop

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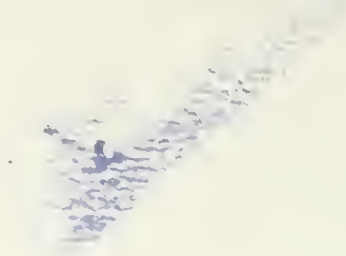
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